



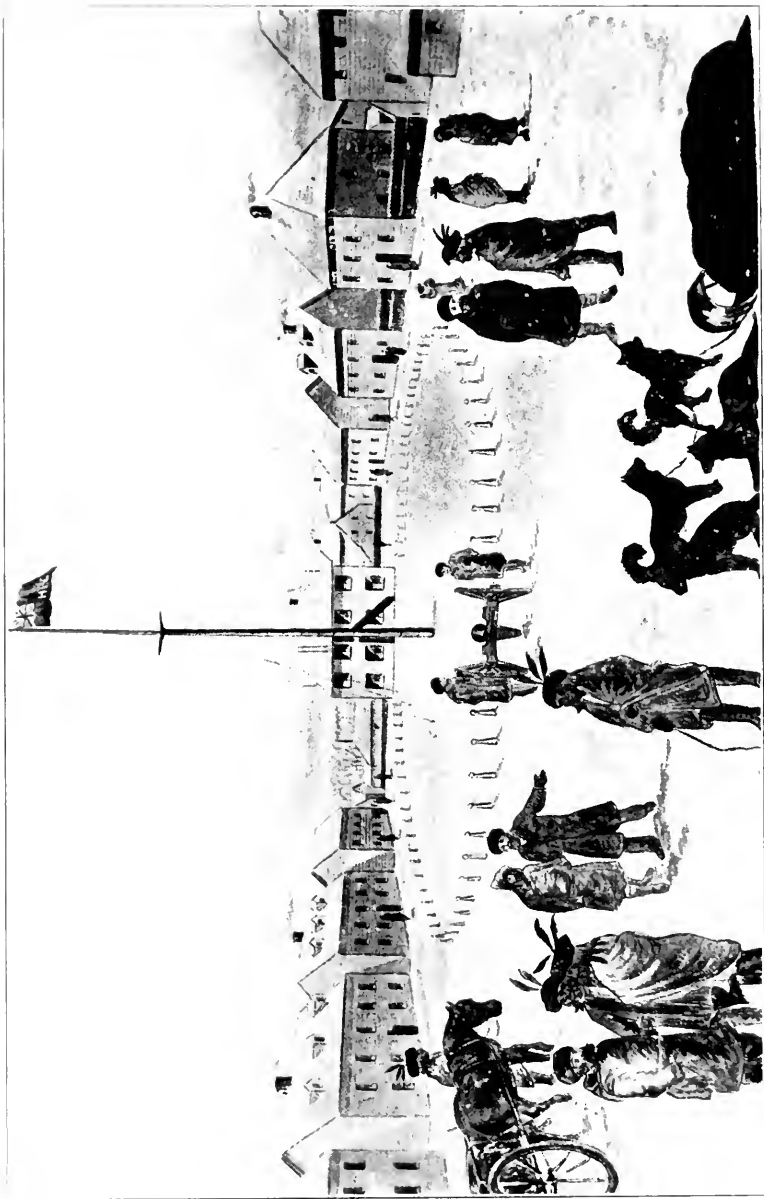
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THE FUR-TRADE
and
EARLY WESTERN EXPLORATION

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INTERIOR VIEW OF FORT GARRY
As it appeared in 1871

THE FUR-TRADE

and

EARLY WESTERN EXPLORATION

by

CLARENCE A. VANDIVEER



THE ARTHUR H. CLARK COMPANY
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WILSON

TO
MY MOTHER

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Preface

The story of the fur-trade is very largely the story of pioneer America. The fur-trade was the agency through which all the vast interior of the continent was explored and made known to the world. The trapper and the trader were the real pioneers and trail blazers, while the rude trading posts they established at various strategic points were the genesis of many of our modern cities. The story of the fur-trade, we might say, is a twice-told tale, and yet, it seems, never has it been told in a concrete manner and within the pages of a single volume. Writers in the past seem never to have grasped the real significance of the work performed by those buckskin-clad, rifle-bearing fur hunters, who in the pursuit of their chosen calling, so unconsciously prepared the land for the advance of civilization.

That the reading public might become more familiar with the history of the fur-trade, of the early explorations of the West, and of the significant part the events herein narrated have played in the history of America and Canada, the writer has attempted the present work. He does not claim to have brought to light any new facts, nor can he hope to have avoided all mistakes, for in the preparation of a work such as this, there is a vast amount of conflicting material to be weighed and sifted, but in all cases he has endeavored to follow what he has considered the best authorities.

The task of preparing this volume has been a pleas-

ant one and I greatly hope the reader too will not be disappointed, that he will not find it dry and uninteresting. It is a story of great deeds, of triumphs modestly achieved, and of failures and disasters patiently borne. There are heroes aplenty and the villain is not lacking in the play. In dealing with a theme so romantic the writer has endeavored to keep on safe ground and never to substitute the fanciful for the real. The truth itself is colorful enough for all purposes.

In preparing this work the author has had the benefit of the kindly advice and aid of Mr. A. R. Harding, in whose magazine the chapters first appeared as a serial, and to Mr. George Bird Grinnell, whose generous encouragement led to their being brought out in book form.

CLARENCE A. VANDIVEER

November, 1928

Chapter I
Beginnings of the Fur-trade

Beginnings of the Fur-trade

While Pedro Menendez was industriously engaged in murdering Ribaut's colonists along the Matanzas and Saint Johns rivers, and thus putting an end forever to French claims to the beautiful peninsula of Florida, other Frenchmen were more successfully laying the foundation of a permanent state far to the northward along the misty shores of the broad Saint Lawrence. Basque fishermen had for some years frequented the coasts of maritime Canada to load their vessels with the finny denizens which swarmed in those waters, and they, from time to time, met up with roving bands of indians eager to exchange their valuable furs and peltries for the cheapest and poorest goods of European manufacture, knives, beads and trinkets of little or no value. Quite a lucrative trade soon sprang up between the fishermen and the savages, and the former soon learned that it was far easier and a great deal more profitable to trade for furs than to fish for a living.

One after another of these erstwhile fishermen went into the fur business, and rude trading posts began to appear along the shores of Anticosti and elsewhere. In this feeble fashion was begun that mighty traffic which was later on to embrace our entire continent in its varied ramifications; it was to lead to a series of explorations which was to lay bare the secrets of all North America;

it was to lead to wars and international complications; it was to determine the growth of communities, states and cities, and in fact for several centuries the history of the fur-trade was to be the history of Canada, and to a lesser extent the history of the English colonies as well.

The first traders were a wild, lawless crowd, and carried on in a most high-handed manner in their wilderness strongholds. They cruised about in small vessels all along the coasts of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence in search of walrus tusks, and their labors were well repaid. These hardy rovers were quite content to leave the Spaniards to chase the phantoms of golden cities, mines of precious stones and fountains of perpetual youth in the sunny lands of the South; they preferred the slower, less spectacular but far surer wealth the fur-trade offered in the frozen and inhospitable regions of the more northern coasts.

The trade continued to expand and the traders grew in number year by year. It was a game of each fellow for himself until 1588, in which year the French government granted to two adventurers a monopoly of the trade for a period of twelve years. This monopoly, the first of the many, aroused such a howl of protest that it was promptly revoked. Nevertheless, ten years later, the French government granted to one LaRoche a monopoly of the fur-trade, along with all kinds of titles and powers in the land which Cartier, Roberval and others had explored and claimed for France. LaRoche failed in everything he attempted and landed in a debtor's prison, while the miserable crew of forty-one men he had landed in Canada after suffering all kinds of misfortunes in five years, had dwindled away to only eleven

men. They accumulated a valuable stock of furs, however, and these the commander of the expedition, sent out for their rescue, seized for himself, but eventually he was compelled to restore his ill-gotten gains to the rightful owners.

Pontgravé, a merchant of Saint Malo, and a Captain Chauvin of the navy, next tried their hands at trade and colonization. They built a rude cluster of huts at Tadoussac at the mouth of the Saguenay, but this settlement was broken up before the winter was over and the survivors were living upon the charity of the savages.

At this juncture two strong personages made their appearance upon the historical drama of both the old and the new worlds: Henry of Navarre, the gallant victor of Ivry and Arques, and Samuel de Champlain, who like his master had won renown in the religious wars which had so long plagued France. Under Henry's rule France recovered from much of the evil effects of civil strife and started once more on the road to prosperity; under Champlain, Canada was to be made into a real colony for France.

Champlain was induced to join in the Canadian venture by one DeChaste, a friend of his who had linked his fortunes with the Amerian trade. Champlain and Pontgravé were each given a vessel and sent on a voyage up the Saint Lawrence. Passing the ruins of Tadoussac the voyagers pushed on up the broad expanse of the lordly river until they saw Mount Royal rising grim and sentinel-like above the surrounding forests. Cartier had been to this place sixty-eight years before and had found the busy indian town of Hochelaga occupying the site upon which now stands Canada's greatest city, but Champlain found the place deserted by its former

savage tenants and silence reigning throughout the gloomy forests.

Progress beyond Mount Royal was halted by the Lachine rapids, and so the explorers turned the prows of their vessels toward home. Arriving in France Champlain found that DeChaste had died and that a new company had been formed, headed by Sieur de Monts, who was given viceregal powers and a monopoly of the fur-trade, all previous grants being annulled in his favor. Of course these grants were followed by a storm of protests from the old traders, but DeMonts had the good sense to associate many of these discontented men with him in the new enterprise. Champlain and Pontgravé were among those who took service under DeMonts.

It was resolved to establish the headquarters of this company south of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence in the region now known as Nova Scotia. They gave the name of Acadia to their proposed settlement – a name which was to be associated with much of the strife between the French and the English later on and to furnish the materials for Longfellow's beautiful poem *Evangeline*, of which every school boy is familiar.

DeMonts began operations in Acadia by seizing the trading vessels of one Rossignal who was poaching, unintentionally perhaps, upon his territory. Pontgravé, who commanded one of DeMonts's vessels, made a prize of four more fur-traders at Canceau. Pontgravé was now sent back northward to trade with the indians at Tadoussac, while DeMonts and Champlain pushed on to the northward on a tour of exploration.

Upon reaching the Bay of Funday Baron de Poutrincourt, one of DeMonts's men, asked for and received a

grant of land for himself, which he gave the name of Port Royal. DeMonts and Champlain chose an island at the mouth of the Saint Croix for their winter quarters. Here they were soon shut in by walls of snow and ice while scurvy, that curse of the early explorers and colonizers, raged with frightful consequences. Of the seventy-nine men who had gone into winter quarters only forty-four were alive when spring came.

Dissatisfied with this location the adventurers set out in June to seek a more favorable site farther south. They threaded the rocky and deeply indented shores of Maine, passing the mouths of the Penobscot and the Kennebec and sighting the distant White mountains, finally entered Massachusetts Bay. They visited Plymouth Bay where fifteen years later (in 1620) the Pilgrim Fathers were to make their memorable landing.

But no place suited DeMonts and so they returned to the Saint Croix, loaded up their possessions and transferred headquarters to Port Royal. Leaving Pontgravé in charge of the station, DeMonts and Poutrincourt went back to France for supplies and reinforcements. Coming back the next year Poutrincourt found that the station at Port Royal had been abandoned by all but two men, provisions having given out, while the rest in small boats were pushing on up the coast in search of food. These men were soon found and again Port Royal was occupied. DeMonts had remained in France, and Poutrincourt soon returned to that country also to help in smoothing over their affairs, which were not in the best shape. Pontgravé and Champlain remained to carry on the work of exploration and trade while an able gentleman named Lescarbot took charge of Port Royal.

A description of one of these earliest trading posts and an account of the life led by the traders will not be out of place. Port Royal was a quadrangle of wooden buildings enclosing a large court. An arched gateway facing the water front gave ingress and egress and was flanked with a bastion of palisades. Another bastion mounted four cannon. The kitchen, forge and oven occupied the buildings between the bastions. Storehouses and magazines occupied another side of the square. Another side was taken up by quarters for the men while the remaining side was occupied by quarters for officers and a dining hall.

Every effort was made by the commandant, Lescarbot, to test out the resources of the country. He planted grain and vegetables, and labored in his garden until far into the night. He kept up the spirits of his men by creating the *Ordre de bon temps*, whose members vied with one another in supplying luxuries for the table. Each was to serve as quartermaster for one day, and of course he tried to excel his predecessor in the variety and excellence of the food served. Here in this wild outpost of France and of the fur-trade, the traders and their indian friends feasted and smoked away what otherwise would have been a very lonely existence. The long-winter evenings were whiled away in the drinking of toasts and the singing of songs, and the naturally gay disposition of the French gave vent to itself even though the nearest civilized neighbors were the little handful of Spaniards huddled together in far away Saint Augustine.

Spring found the French eager to begin their trading, their building and their planting, but one fine morning all this bustle and preparation was brought to

an abrupt end by the arrival of a French ship with news that DeMonts's monopoly had been rescinded. Sorrowfully they abandoned Port Royal, and after filling their ships with a cargo of fish they set sail for France.

Poutrincourt came back to Port Royal with a fresh batch of traders and colonists. Illicit traders, French and Dutch, also cruised the coasts, dealing cruelly and lawlessly with the indians. Poutrincourt's son patrolled the coast in an endeavor to break up this unlawful trade, while he himself seems to have spent a considerable part of his time in quarreling with the Jesuits Massé and Baird, whom he had been compelled to bring with him back to Canada. The arrival of these two priests marks the beginning of that remarkable story of heroism, privation, suffering and martyrdom which marks the career of the Jesuits in Canada; it also marks the beginning of strife between the civil authorities, who invariably were vitally interested in the fur-trade, and the black-robed priests, whose interests were often quite at variance with those of the traders.

Meanwhile Champlain had established himself on the natural rock fortress of Quebec. He had long been under the spell of the beautiful Saint Lawrence, whose course he had already followed as far as the rapids at Mount Royal, and when DeMonts was obliged to give up Port Royal he sought to reëstablish himself on the Saint Lawrence, and therefore he sent Champlain to establish a station at Quebec and endeavor to found a permanent colony there. Pontgravé was to have charge of the fur-trade, Champlain of the colonizing and exploring. Exploration and trade were thus inseparably linked together from the very first.

Champlain's military eye had at once taken in the im-

portance of the natural rock fortress that commands the narrow part of the Saint Lawrence, and he at once further strengthened the place with a wooden wall and moat, within which enclosure he erected the buildings necessary for his needs. Mutiny soon raised its ugly head, but Champlain promptly hanged the leader and sent three of his chief advisors back to France. The rest he freely forgave.

We would like to know the incidents of that first long winter spent within the walls of Quebec, but no record of them has come down to us. We do know that members of the miserable Algonquin tribes flocked inside the walls clamoring for food and for protection against the Iroquois, those tigerish warriors who dwelt to the southward of Lake Ontario and of the Saint Lawrence, who kept the northern tribes in a perpetual delirium of fear, and who ere long the French, too, were to learn to dread. Such were the beginnings of Quebec.

Chapter II
Exploration and Trade

Exploration and Trade

While the savages were starving and begging and shivering outside the walls of Quebec sickness was raging among the French on the inside, and by the time spring had come the garrison of twenty-eight had dwindled down to eight. The experiences of the first winter at Port Royal were repeated at Quebec, the same story of sickness and death was repeated among the English at Jamestown and Plymouth. It was part of the price exacted by nature for the conquest of the wilderness of North America. With the return of the birds, the blossoms, the wild flowers and the warm sunshine, came an added blessing in the shape of Pontgravé's supply ship at Tadoussac, to which place Champlain hurried with the request that Pontgravé come to Quebec with supplies for the relief of his men, and that furthermore he should take charge of the place while he himself should set forth to put into operation the expeditions of discovery which he had planned and studied over during the long sad winter at Quebec.

Champlain's first move was destined to link inseparably his name with one of the most beautiful lakes in all North America. It was also to gain for him and for France the undying hatred of the ferocious Iroquois. Late in June, 1609, with a few hardy Frenchmen and a crowd of indian allies, Champlain embarked upon an

expedition to the head of the Rivière des Iroquois, now known by the various names of Saint Johns, Sorel and Richelieu. The indians told him that the river was quite free of obstructions, and that boats might pass unhindered quite to the lake at its source. He soon learned, as many a future explorer was to learn, how utterly unreliable the word of an indian was. Champlain was eager to see the lake of which he had heard so much; his allies were just as eager to try out the virtues of the white man's weapons upon their enemies, the Iroquois, and they were resolved to be revenged upon them even if they had to go as far as the villages of those people on the Mohawk. There were delays and vexations a plenty in this expedition up the Richelieu, but Champlain surmounted them all and finally passed on into the lake. We may well imagine his feelings as his flotilla glided among the islands at the head of the lake and finally out upon its open waters, with the wooded masses of the Adirondacks on his right hand and the rocky ridges of the Green mountains stretching away on the left.

Proceeding cautiously along the west bank for several days, they finally encountered a band of Iroquois at the point where Fort Ticonderoga was afterward built. The savages came on to battle bravely, but when they beheld the steel-clad Frenchman and saw the stick that he pointed toward them belch forth fire and smoke and two of their chief men sink down dead, they were panic-stricken and fled in confusion, abandoning their camp, their boats and all they possessed. Champlain's allies killed a few of their enemies, took a few prisoners and quite a lot of booty. It was an easy victory, perhaps the only one these indians had ever won over the Iroquois,

and they were highly elated in consequence. They danced and sang and tortured their captives with such fiendish cruelty that Champlain turned away sick at heart.

Despite their success in this "first battle of Ticonderoga" the allies retreated back to the Saint Lawrence. Pontgravé, in the meantime, had been having trouble with free-traders, those reckless fellows who from those very earliest days of the trade on down to the very end, continued to ply their profitable, though unlawful, trade in spite of monopolies, orders of governors and even of kings. Some of these free-lances had even attacked Pontgravé, wounded him and held him as prisoner for a while, and many of the furs that had come to Tadoussac and should have found their way into his store-houses found their way into the vessels of his rivals.

Troubles thickened about the traders and both Pontgravé and Champlain returned to France, where they found DeMonts in a life and death struggle to maintain his rights. The assassination of Henry IV, in May, 1610, was a further blow. The new king was a minor and an imbecile, his mother, the regent, was a wicked, unscrupulous woman and moreover a tool of the Jesuits, and therefore could be counted upon to make things unpleasant for all colonists and traders who displeased the priests.

DeMonts was a man of grit. Perhaps he had more grit than judgment, for he resolved to go ahead with his plans without the royal sanction.

Champlain was soon back in Canada and ready for new discoveries. He was anxious to find an overland route to the great bay which Henry Hudson had discov-

ered in 1609. His indian allies were so well pleased with the victory he had helped them win over the Iroquois that they promised to lead him westward by way of the Ottawa to the upper Great Lakes. He gained still more favor with them when he helped them to utterly exterminate a party of Iroquois at the mouth of the Richelieu in June, 1610. All things seemed to combine to thwart and delay the explorer however. Rival traders dogged his footsteps, usurping the trade at Tadoussac, and so annoying him at every turn that he resolved to establish himself at a point near the foot of the Lachine rapids, where he might enjoy the trade of the Ottawa and the upper Saint Lawrence free from the annoyance of rivals. The position he chose was one of extreme strategic importance for the fur-trade as well as for other purposes, and the fact that Montreal, the metropolis of the Canadian dominion, has since grown up around the spot, vindicates the judgment of the explorer.

Clearing a considerable space of ground he fenced it in and planted grain within the enclosure. A crowd of greedy traders had followed him up, all eager to take advantage of his pioneering and help share the harvest of furs which the region offered.

Champlain was well received by the few scattering indians he met, but the latter were disgusted with the swarm of greedy traders that had followed him unbidden. Montreal, the metropolis of the early fur-trade, thus had its beginnings.

After endless haggling and quibbling between traders and savages, the latter at last withdrew further up the river. Champlain paid them a visit and was carried back to Montreal in a birch-bark canoe.

More visits to France, more difficulties with rival traders, and more changes in the personnel of the company all conspired to hinder and delay Champlain's plans for further exploration until the spring of 1613, when once more he headed for the unknown.

From time to time reckless adventurers had pushed on into the wilderness, joined bands of roving indians, living their life, marrying their women, adopting their dress and habits, and to all intents and purposes becoming veritable savages themselves. These wild bush-rangers made many valuable discoveries, but as their explorations lacked official approval their reports were either ignored or not believed. That little faith could be placed in the word of some of these men may be readily seen by the incident which we will now relate:

Among these wood-rangers who came to Champlain with stories of remarkable finds was a young man named Nicolas Vignau. This man told of being at the head of the Ottawa where he had found a great lake with a river flowing out of it to the northward, and had descended this river to the sea where he found the wreck of an English vessel. Champlain had already heard rumors of such a wreck, and his brain was fired with visions of a water route to Asia—a fanciful vision which had lured so many explorers to their doom. Embarking with an indian and four Frenchmen, one of whom was Vignau, Champlain ascended the Saint Lawrence to the Ottawa and thence up that stream, portaging around rapids until they could proceed no further. Wandering about among the forests for some time, visiting indians and making inquiries everywhere, they failed to learn anything concerning the sea of which they were in search. At last

they came among indians with whom Vignau had once lived, and from them learned that he had never been farther than their villages, and that his story was a fabrication. Confronted with this evidence, Vignau broke down and confessed to his imposture. Many a commander would have hung the liar then and there and the indians urged Champlain to do so, but he pardoned the rascal and with a sad heart turned toward home. It is impossible to fix a motive for the remarkable conduct of Vignau in this matter.

Once more Champlain returned to France, this time returning with a batch of Recollet friars, for unlike most fur-traders, Champlain welcomed these religious men into the country, but then we must remember that Champlain was more of an explorer and colonizer than he was a fur-trader. He was just as anxious to win the souls of the indians as he was to secure their beaver skins. Arriving at Quebec one of these priests, LeCaron, was assigned as missionary to the Hurons; another, Dolbeau, was sent to the Montagnais; the rest remained at Quebec.

All of the Algonquin tribes were eager to make an alliance with the French against the Iroquois as a common foe, and Champlain thought this a wise plan to follow. Could all the tribes be led to depend upon the French soldiers for protection, upon the priests for spiritual help, and upon the traders for their increasing wants, he would be able to bind the tribes to France with the strongest of bonds.

LeCaron was so anxious to reach the scene of his labors that he pushed on in advance of the escort, and thus was enabled to look upon the waters of Lake Huron in advance of that leader. It is possible that one

of Champlain's men, Étienne Brûlé, had seen the waters of Huron as well as several others of the Great Lakes, for he had traveled far and wide among the indians of those regions before Champlain and LeCaron had set out on their expedition. Champlain's party passed on by the place where, in company with Vignau he had left the river when on his wild goose chase after the phantom of a waterway to Asia, on past Lake Nipissing, and from thence to Lake Huron.

After visiting among the Hurons at their villages Champlain proceeded to Lake Simcoe and the Trent river, crossing over into the Iroquois country, in what is now northern New York, and attacked the enemy, but they met with such a rough reception that they retreated over to the Huron country again. Champlain was back in Quebec again in June, 1616.

While Champlain and his allies were preparing to attack the Iroquois Étienne Brûlé had gone to the country of the Andastes to enlist the aid of that tribe, but he arrived too late to be of assistance to his chief. He spent three years in wandering amid new scenes, and is said to have descended the Susquehanna to the sea. Later on he fell into the hands of the Iroquois and was frightfully tortured by them until he succeeded in so working upon their superstitious natures that they finally turned him loose.

Permanent stations were now firmly established at Quebec, Montreal, Tadoussac and Three Rivers, and while the fur-trade was brisk the colony did not prosper. The traders were interested only in the indians' furs, the priests in the indians' souls, and neither cared much to see white settlers brought into the country.

Later on the government refused permission to

protestants to emigrate to Canada, and allowed only catholics to come over. As the protestants had grievances at home which caused them to wish to emigrate to America and the catholics were desirous of remaining in the home-land, the result was that few colonists were available. With all this meddling and intermeddling of the government, the priesthood and the rivalry of traders, no wonder the colony did not flourish.

Already clouds were appearing on the southern horizon and Canada was soon to feel the need of men to defend her. England's neglected colonies were growing and prospering amazingly and were casting jealous eyes toward the north. Already the Acadian settlements had been broken up by English from Jamestown and in 1625 the English, under Kirk, laid siege to Quebec. The brave Champlain held on till the last but was finally obliged to give up, but peace in Europe gave the place back to France, and Champlain came back to die within the walls of the city he had founded.

Chapter III
English, Dutch, and French Rivalry

English, Dutch, and French Rivalry

While from the first France had been the leader in the fur-trade business, yet adventurers of other nations were busy along the same lines. English vessels prowled along the coasts trading and quarreling with the natives, for the Anglo-saxon was never able to win the friendship of the indians as was his Gallic neighbor, they seldom intermarried or cohabited with the natives, nor did they take to the wild free life of the forests as did the gay and reckless men of French blood. Not until the founding of the Hudson's Bay Company of later years did the English learn how to deal successfully with the savages.

As far back as 1607, one year before Champlain had raised the French flag over the rocky fortress of Quebec, the English had built their first permanent settlement at Jamestown in Virginia. These early settlers were gentlemen, unused to toil or hardship of any kind, and as thoroughly unfitted for the wilderness life as men could well be. There ensued a "starving time," at the close of which most of the incompetents were in their graves.

The best man in the Virginia colony was Captain John Smith. This able and energetic man kept the settlers at work, preserved the peace with the neighboring savages and made extensive explorations along the

coast. He left a record of his adventures and explorations which is both interesting and valuable, although some of his statements must be taken with a liberal pinch of salt, for the worthy captain was not above romancing – a failing which seems to have been common among early explorers and not altogether uncommon in our own day.

The fur-trade in the early English colonies was a sort of free-trade affair and no records were kept, but it would seem that English traders, went farther afield and penetrated deeper into the western wilds than has been generally supposed.

Fourteen years after Jamestown, Plymouth was settled by the pilgrims. These newcomers were seekers after religious freedom, and not gold-hunters or fur-traders. The colonists which continued to pour into the country were of the same stamp and mould as their predecessors, being settlers in the true meaning of the word. A few trappers and traders hung about the borders of the expanding settlements, and a few forts and trading posts were erected by them at various places, and sometimes these men came in contact with French traders and much bad blood was engendered, but for the most part the English were content to dwell in settled communities in the river valleys or within hearing of the beating of the salt waves along the coast.

The Dutch, too, instead of going among the indians for their furs were content to sit comfortably in their snug houses along the Hudson and let the red man bring the furs to them there. The Hudson had been discovered by Henry Hudson in the year 1609 and four years later New Amsterdam (New York) was founded on the island of Manhattan at the river's mouth. Still

later a trading post was built far up the river at Albany. This remained an important station in the fur business for many years. Wealthy merchants of Holland sent out a small fleet in charge of such able navigators as Adrien Block, Hendrick Corstianesen and Cornelius Mey, who added much to the knowledge of geography on that coast and brought back to Holland such flattering reports that the merchants obtained a monopoly on the trade of those regions for the period of three years.

In 1621 the famous Dutch West India Company was formed, and while great profits were realized from the venture, little more was done toward extending operations into the interior. Like the English of those days the Dutch were a maritime people, and their interests were centered in territory accessible to navigable waters. Dutch and French traders often came in contact with one another around the headwaters of the Hudson or in the valley of the Mohawk, for the latter were sure to be everywhere where fur was to be obtained. They also quarreled and fought with English traders on the Connecticut.

Perhaps the question of supremacy in North America would have been fought out between the English, the Dutch and the French years before it was had it not been for the wall of the Iroquois confederacy which lay between the Canadians and their neighbors to the south. Champlain had incurred the undying enmity of these people by his victory over them at the lake now named for him, and later conflicts had widened the breach. Englishman and Hollander, fortunately for themselves, had made friends with this warlike people and as it turned out, in their hands lay the balance of power. Were it not for the Iroquois barrier, and, for

the mistaken policy of France in regard to Canada, North America might be French today instead of Anglo-american. As it was, the French trader explored all of interior America, marked out all the trails and portages, only to be deprived of all the fruits of their labors in the end by the prosaic sons of old Albion. The Hollanders on the banks of the Hudson and its tributaries were also to suffer the same fate as the French. England eventually absorbed all of New Amsterdam and the little trading post on Manhattan, renamed in honor of the Duke of York, grew in wealth and importance, but even England was to lose her grip on this gateway of America, and in new hands and under a new flag the city was destined to continue its marvelous growth until today it more than rivals the proud old city on the banks of the Thames.

Meanwhile, while the English were building permanent homes and contenting themselves largely in agriculture and in maritime affairs, and the Dutch were dozing and smoking and trading by turns at their comfortable little forts, the adventurous sons of France were ranging the forests and threading the intricate waterways of the interior, building up their trade and pushing their explorations in all directions. In the Canadian settlements the people were virtually slaves, they gained no freedom in emigrating to America as did the English; instead, the hand of both church and state fell harder upon them than in the home-land. The early French traders had tried to keep free from the vassalage of the priesthood, but it had been forced upon them nevertheless. A class now sprang up in Canada who were determined to free themselves of this vassalage to both church and state, and they did by avoiding the

mission stations and settlements and taking to the woods.

The men who thus sought to emancipate themselves soon came to be known as *coureurs de bois*, rangers of the woods, voyageurs into the unknown. These men followed the indian in his wanderings, his war excursions, and his hunting expeditions, shared his rude life in the smoky wigwams, married indian women and raised large families of half-breed children, and to all intents and purposes becoming veritable indians themselves. Their superior intellect and training, added to the knowledge of woodcraft which they soon acquired, made them a peculiar feature of Canadian life; recklessly brave, ridiculously superstitious, oftentimes devout, sometimes savagely cruel, but at all times gay and light-hearted, these *coureurs de bois* offered the best material possible for wilderness campaigns, and whenever their leaders could keep their wild natures within bounds they proved invaluable servants, but they chafed at restraint and became very frequently a menace to and a thorn in the side of priests, civil authorities, and licensed traders, whose sensibilities were shocked by the wild excesses and drunken orgies these wild men indulged in during their infrequent visits to the frontier posts. They also carried on an illicit trade in liquor with the savages, with the same sad results that has always attended the sale of intoxicants to uncivilized peoples.

One of the most famous of these early woods rangers was Jean Nicolet of Three Rivers, who in 1634 had ventured into the regions of the lakes where he heard rumors of a great river, probably the Mississippi; he extended his observations as far westward as the strait of Sault Sainte Marie, and possibly even beyond; he also passed through the straits of Michillimackinac and

into Lake Michigan. It is thought that Étienne Brûlé, another of the wild fraternity of the woods, was in these regions previous to Nicolet, but this remains in the realm of guesswork. Hearing of a tribe of people in the region of Green Bay, in Wisconsin, who resembled the Chinese, Nicolet, like many a deluded explorer before and since, thought that he was near the Orient, and so he dressed himself up in a robe gaily decorated with figures of flowers and birds and with pistol in each hand presented himself in the village of those people, but he found them to be indians differing little, if any, from all others he had met, and whatever notions he may have formed were dispelled.

The exclusive monopolies in fur-trading which the French king granted, the system of tolls and bribery and tribute which crooked officials, and there were always many crooked officials in Canada, imposed upon the people was responsible for much of the lawlessness of the woods rangers. At one time it was even planned to restrict all the western trade to the one post at Montreal, and accordingly great annual fairs were held there.

These annual fairs were lively affairs. On the day after the arrival of the indians there would be a sort of social affair in which the smoking of peace pipes and the declaiming of much high-toned oratory were prominent features. Next day trade was begun. These gatherings must have been picturesque affairs indeed. Picture in your mind the rough, wooden stockade, the shaggy forests nearby; the swift, rushing river with its beach littered with gay birch-bark canoes; tall, sedate chiefs stalking about, all decked out in paint and feathers; white officials, stiff, proud, and well aware of their own

importance, decked out in gold braid and trimmings almost as gaudy as the indians themselves; groups of shy, gaping squaws, some young and pretty, others old, wrinkled and hideous with the grime and smoke of many camp fires; children naked as on the day they were born, playing with the mangy village curs and romping about in wild abandon; and last, but not least, the *coureurs de bois*, in for a brief holiday from the woods and ready to "paint the town red" just as soon as liquor could be procured, a thing which the more orderly traders sought to avoid, their efforts being seconded by the priests who were also sure to be present at these annual gatherings, with a view to securing new converts to christianity and of forgiving any sins that their older converts may have committed during the year. Often these gatherings ended in the wildest of orgies, in which white man and savage vied with one another in scenes of the most disgusting and depraving debauchery.

Chapter IV

Explorations of Radisson and Groseilliers

Explorations of Radisson and Groseilliers

The hand of authority meddled with everything in French Canada, often with ruinous results. Attempts were made to allow only licensed traders to operate, and licenses were costly. Prices were to remain at fixed figures, regardless of the law of supply and demand. As a result of these rulings illicit traders were numerous, while the officials, who very frequently shared in the unlawful gains, winked at the offenders. When traders had a surplus of beaver skins they burned them to create a scarcity. By such methods was the trade carried on. No wonder the French colony languished, while the English colonies to the south, where trade was unhampered, grew by leaps and bounds.

Among those who laughed at the hampering and unjust laws of governor and king were two daring and capable men, whose achievements have never received a tithe of the praise due them. Pierre Esprit Radisson and his brother-in-law, Médard Chouart Groseilliers had both seen service in wilderness trade and both were fired with the spirit of adventure. Every rumor which came from the far northwest but added fuel to the flame of their zeal. Wealth, adventure and renown were the prizes offered in exchange for effort, although neither was blind to the possibilities of what might lie in store for them. They knew for a certainty that hardship, toil,

hunger and exposure were the lot of all explorers; they knew the danger from hostile indians with captivity, torture and even death should they be so unfortunate as to fall into their cruel hands, but while counting the dangers they also counted the gains and were willing to take the gambler's chance.

In June, 1658, Radisson and Groseilliers left Three Rivers and turned their faces toward the unknown. They stopped at Montreal long enough to raise a company of indians and voyageurs and then hurried on up the river. The crew was inexperienced and disorderly and gave the two adventurers much trouble. All efforts to promote discipline or caution were brushed aside, and they laughed and jeered at their cautious methods and reproached them with cowardice. The grit of the boasters was soon put to a test, for a band of Iroquois apprised of their approach by the shouting and the firing of guns laid a skillful ambush for the party. When the fighting was over the boastful French were retreating toward Montreal as fast as possible. Radisson and Groseilliers and their indian allies were also moving swiftly – not in the direction of Montreal, however, but westward toward the setting sun. It would take more than one war party of Iroquois to turn them back.

Autumn came to the north country, leaves were turning rapidly from emerald to yellow and crimson, there was a keen, sharp tang in the air which warned of coming snows and chilling blasts, and hurried our travelers on to their proposed winter quarters at Green Bay. Here they established themselves and lay snug while all about them through the forests the wintry winds howled and shrieked and piled up a wall of snow about the walls of their rude shelter. Day after day they looked

out over the white world about them and longed for spring and sunshine, and dreamed of the new lands they were to discover.

Early in 1659 they crossed over what is now Wisconsin and beheld "a mighty river, great, rushing, profound and comparable to the Saint Lawrence" – it was the mighty Mississippi. The Spaniard De Soto had gazed upon the lower reaches of this great river many years before but these two unknown French trappers are the first white men, so far as we now know, to see it in the north. Ten years later the Jesuit, Marquette, came to it by way of Fox and Wisconsin rivers and was unjustly credited with the discovery. The reason why the expedition of Radisson and his companion has been passed over in silence can be explained only by the fact that both men fell into disfavor with the Canadian officials, both civil and ecclesiastic, and so honors were withheld from them. Like some of our own fur-trade explorers their expedition lacked the stamp of official sanction, and so the honors were passed on to other men.

Fortunately Radisson left behind him papers and memorandums which have been rescued from oblivion and given their place in history. He has written much in praise of the land he discovered, its resources and the chances it had to offer to those who wished to found free, happy and prosperous communities. Radisson was a catholic, but an extremely liberal one for those days, and he remarks that it would be far more desirable to win souls for Christ from among the natives of this land than to quarrel and wage war over differences in creed "when wrongs are committed under pretense of religion." Radisson and Groseilliers were on the Mississippi fully a decade before Marquette and Joliet, and

twenty years before LaSalle, but such is the strange workings of fate that the later comers have become famous while the real discoverers have scarcely yet emerged from oblivion.

Just how far to the westward and southward our travelers journeyed is a matter of mere guesswork. They probably visited the Mandans on the Missouri, as some of Radisson's descriptions seem to apply to those people; he also speaks of mountains far in the interior which would seem to indicate that he had at least been apprised of the existence of the Rockies. While gathering this store of knowledge concerning the western country our heroes did not totally neglect the fur-trade and when they finally went back to Montreal they carried with them a most valuable cargo of fur.

On the return journey Radisson's indians were greatly frightened by rumors of Iroquois raiders, and it required all of the wits of the Frenchmen to keep their followers from becoming panic stricken. At the rapids of the Long Sault they had a skirmish with the enemy which had taken refuge in a rude stockade, but they easily put them to flight. Inside the walls the Frenchmen found evidences of a desperate fight. Charred, blackened and mutilated corpses were scattered about, while the recently ejected savages had left behind them a number of fresh and bloody scalps.

Eight days later they learned that there had been a terrible battle between the Iroquois and a band of Frenchmen and Algonquins under the command of Adam Dollard, who had built the fort in order to check a party of Iroquois on their way to attack Montreal. A band of Hurons had joined the party, but upon the appearance of the enemy all but the chief deserted. The

first attacks of the Iroquois were beaten off by the brave band which numbered seventeen Frenchmen, four Algonquins and one Huron, twenty-two in all. Outnumbered greatly but undaunted to the last, this Spartan band held on stubbornly, piling up Iroquois dead in heaps outside the walls of the stockade until at last in one grand assault the enemy forced their way into the fort, only to find every man down and weltering in gore. There was no one left to lift a hand against the assailants. Four Frenchmen were found to have a spark of life still lingering, and these were brutally tortured until death finally came as a relief. The Hurons that had deserted their chief fared no better than those who had sold their lives at such a high price, for the Iroquois hunted them down and massacred them without mercy.

In this Canadian Thermopylae there was no messenger of defeat. Dollard and every man under him had paid the supreme price, but they had saved Montreal from attack and by the fearful price they had exacted from the Iroquois had discouraged them from pushing the war further. Parkman gives a graphic account of Dollard's heroic battle at the Long Sault, but makes no mention of Radisson's fight at the same place a few days later. It is doubtful if Parkman ever heard of this fight at all.

Proceeding on down the Saint Lawrence Radisson and Groseilliers ran the rapids in safety and were soon at Quebec, where they were the heroes of the hour. They were wined and dined and fêted without stint, for they had opened up a new region to the fur-trade and moreover their rich cargo of furs was a welcome one, for without them the fur-ships would have been compelled to return to France without a single beaver pelt.

Had our two adventurers done no more nor attempted no more all might have been well but their appetite for adventure had only been whetted, much less satisfied, by their western experiences. Other fields awaited them, there were rumors of a great bay to the north (Hudson's), and they were anxious to break a trail overland to it from the south, but a jealous governor intervened. To accomplish their objects both men were quite willing to disobey or ignore the governor and the religious authorities as well, and thus they arrayed both civil and religious authorities against them at the same time. Furthermore, they wished to reap the rewards of the fur-trade without the payment of bribes, and this touched the governor in the sorest spot. We will take up the further adventures of Radisson and Grosseilliers later on in this story.

While there was much action, excitement and change of scene in the lives of such adventurers and travelers as Nicolet, Radisson, Grosseilliers and others of their kind, for those traders who remained at the little isolated trading posts life was dreary enough. True there was the beauties of the wilderness in springtime, with all the blossoming, budding and fragrance of that season, which was further enlivened by the return of the birds and wild-fowl from the southland, then there was the pleasant summer season with the river, now free from ice, gliding swiftly by the door, murmuring musically along long quiet reaches and roaring savagely at the rapids; with the forests decked out in all the green finery of the season, silver birches gleaming against the dark background of conifers and every bough vocal with happy bird-life; but, then too, there was the long periods of iron desolation when winter

held the land in its icy grasp, and when the silence and desolation of the season was almost intolerable to such a gay people as the French. The visit of strange trapper or indian was an event of importance at such times.

The daily routine of these traders was pretty much the same from year to year, and the order of trading when a band of indians visited the post was uniformly alike, one day for establishing camp, one day for council with officers, and on the third day the trading began, the indians exchanging their furs for cloth, guns, ammunition, knives, kettles, cooking utensils, and last but not least, for glass beads and other articles of personal adornment and decoration. The last day was likely to be spent in a grand spree, after which they would bundle their purchases into their birchen canoes and paddle away into the wilderness, to be swallowed up in its depths for another long year.

Chapter V
Marquette and Joliet - Early Waterways
and Portages

Marquette and Joliet - Early Waterways and Portages

We now come to the period of Marquette's and Joliet's Mississippi expedition. Pere Marquette was a Jesuit priest of an adventurous nature, who like many another missionary in savage lands was an explorer as well as a preacher of the gospel; Joliet, a splendid woodsman and an enthusiastic fur-trader. Both men had heard rumors of the existence of a great river to the south of the Great Lakes which could be reached by easy portages and connecting tributaries. Perhaps more than mere rumors had reached their ears, for we know that ten years before Radisson and Groseilliers had discovered this great river and probably the muddy Missouri as well, but either knowledge of these men's exploit had been forgotten or had been disbelieved, or else what is more probable, their report had been suppressed by jealous rivals who wished to rob the two unpopular traders of their glory. However this may be, Marquette and Joliet, the priest and the trader, set out in 1673 to find the "Father of Waters," one with an eye especially open for the saving of souls, the other for the finding of a good fur-producing country, but both longing to see the river of their dreams. Both men were brave, hardy and fearless, both were honored and respected by all who knew them.

With five companions in two canoes they followed the route of Nicolet up Fox river into Wisconsin's lovely lake region, portaged across to the Wisconsin and floated down that stream to the Mississippi, and on down the great river into the unknown. Their intercourse with the natives was peaceful and pleasant, they enjoyed the weird scenery of the bluffs which bounded the river, they feasted royally on buffalo, which they found in incredible numbers on the rolling, grassy plains which stretched in limitless expanse on either hand. They passed the mouth of the Missouri whose turbid flood came rolling in from the westward and entirely changed the color and character of the river upon which they were traveling. The mouths of the Ohio and of the Arkansas were passed in turn, and finally our travelers were convinced that the great river had its objective point not in the Atlantic or the Pacific, but in the Mexican gulf, in territory claimed by Spain. Arriving at this conclusion they reluctantly abandoned further exploration and turned their prows upstream. They did not return to Lake Michigan by the way they had come but went up the Illinois and across by the Chicago portage instead.

Marquette and Joliet had been very fortunate in their travels but now their good fortune came to an end. Marquette was taken suddenly ill and died before getting out of the wilderness. He was buried on the shores of Lake Michigan by his faithful red converts, who brought the sad news to the settlements. Joliet was not present when Marquette passed away, having hurried on ahead to carry the news of the discovery to Quebec. Frontenac, the French governor, received him joyfully, but when it came to procuring permission to trade in the regions he had explored he met with a flat refusal

and the privilege was granted to Frontenac's friend, Robert Cavalier de LaSalle instead. It was only another case of not being allowed to reap where one had sown.

We have seen how Marquette and Joliet proceeded from Lake Michigan waters to those of the Mississippi by way of the portage between the Fox and Wisconsin rivers and returned by way of the portage between the Illinois and the Chicago. These portage paths and inland waterways played a considerable part in the early exploration and history of the interior of the continent.

Some of these portages have become quite historic. The Indians first located and established the paths connecting the heads of the various rivers, and when the white man came he naturally made use of these ready made trails in his trading and exploring expeditions. The home-building Englishmen built their substantial settlements at the head of bays and rivers along the Atlantic coast. To his back was a wilderness almost devoid of navigable waterways and beyond lay the blue wall of the Appalachians. Consequently he never became a riverman.

The *coureurs de bois* of French and Indian extraction had their homes along the mighty Saint Lawrence and its tributaries, a perfect network of waterways by means of which, with the occasional use of a portage path, he could penetrate by boat almost to the far Cordilleras, and we are to see Vérendrye at the very foot of the Rockies long before our own Daniel Boone had penetrated into Kentucky.

There was a portage from the Ottawa to Lake Nipissing which in turn was connected with Lake Huron by the French river. Champlain, Brûlé, the Jesuits and the early voyageurs used this route from the very beginning.

Another less used portage was one by way of Lake Ontario, the Trent, Lake Simcoe, Lake Huron and connecting portage paths. Champlain used this route in his unsuccessful campaign against the Iroquois in western New York.

A chain of portages connected the western end of Lake Superior with Lake of the Woods, Rainy lake and tributary streams. The fur-traders early appreciated the advantages of this route and the Northwest Company afterward built Fort William on these waters because of the conveniences offered for easy communication and travel.

There was a portage connecting Superior with the Mississippi via the Saint Louis river. Other carries were from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi by way of the Calumet and Des Plaines, from the Saint Joseph to the Kankakee and from the Saint Joseph to the Wabash and thence to the Ohio. This route became an important one in the days of the Vincennes settlement. We have already mentioned the two portages used by Marquette and Joliet.

In Ohio the waters of Lake Erie were linked with those of the Ohio by a number of carries and portages. One from the Maumee led to the Wabash, another from the Maumee led to the Great Miami. General Wayne recognized the importance of these Maumee portages and fortified them in 1794. By similar paths were the Scioto and the Sandusky, the Muskingum and the Cuyahoga united. The Ohio was further linked up with Erie by portages from the Allegheny across to Presque Isle and to Chautauqua lake. Niagara Falls cut off all natural water communications between lakes Erie and Ontario but two portages relieved the difficulty. There was a portage from Lake Ontario to the Mohawk. Sev-

eral portages connected the Hudson river with lakes George and Champlain. This route was much used by the indians in their forays against one another, and in later times was the scene of numerous invasions and battles between the English and French and the English and American armies. The names of Diskeau, Johnson, Montcalm, Howe, Burgoyne, Allen, Montgomery, Gates, Schuyler and a host of others are inseparably connected with these routes, routes which the indians and the men of the fur-trade discovered and put into use.

Two much used war trails were those from the Connecticut to the Saint Francis and from the Kennebec and Dead river to the Chanderie, over which Benedict Arnold led his brave continentals against the grim fortress of Quebec in 1775.

The English were always far better seamen than the French but the latter, once the dash of indian blood was added, far excelled as a river man and a canoe man. The French colonist learned to depend upon water transportation while the English depended more upon overland routes, more as a matter of necessity than from choice. The first American trappers and explorers used the Missouri as their highway but later used the overland routes up the valleys of the Arkansas and the Platte instead.

The indians had portage paths between the two main tributaries of the Ohio and Atlantic coast rivers, the Allegheny being linked to the Susquehanna and the Monongahela with the Juniata. Likewise there were portage paths between the Kanawha and the Potomac and the Greenbriar and the James. None of these trails seems to have been much used by the whites, however.

As so much of the fur-traders' traveling was done by

water, several kinds of water-craft came into use. First and foremost was the famous birch-bark canoe, which was light and serviceable and had been used by the indians for countless years before the coming of the white man. It was the "ship of risk and adventure, belonging by rights to him who goes far and travels light, who is careless of his home-coming. It is the boat that now carries the voyageur and is now carried by him." It rides the waves lightly and is easily propelled – also it is easily capsized. The material for its construction was always at hand in the north country. The birch tree was stripped of its covering of tough paper-like bark and stretched over a graceful framework of cedar, the cracks were caulked with gum, a rude paddle was whittled out and your voyageur was ready for a trip to the farthest region. The birch canoe was the greatest product of indian ingenuity, and the only savage-constructed craft that the white man has adopted permanently for his own use. The Kootenais of the northwest make a very useful canoe out of pine bark, the rough side turned inward, which shows by its construction a one time connection between its makers and the savage craftsmen of the Pacific coasts of Asia. In the far south the hollowed out log of the cypress tree was much in use. On the plains of the far west where wood was scarce the indians constructed a circular frame of willow over which they stretched a buffalo hide. These rude and unsatisfactory craft were known as "bull boats" and were principally used to ferry across the plains rivers, yet long journeys have been made in these crazy affairs without mishap or accident.

Chapter VI
Adventures of LaSalle in Canada
and the West

Adventures of LaSalle in Canada and the West

René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de LaSalle, now claims our attention. Born in Rouen, France, November 22, 1643, he became a Jesuit early in life, but soon quit the order and emigrating to Canada began his work in the new land as fur-trader and explorer. With him the fur-trade was only a means to an end. His desire was to make his fame as a discoverer and a colonizer and not as a fur-trader, but one needs money to carry on great schemes, and this the fur-trade offered. His ability was very soon recognized by the French authorities at Quebec, and he was extremely fortunate in cultivating the friendship of iron-hearted old Frontenac, who aided his plans in every way he could.

The first exploring expedition of LaSalle is the subject of much dispute and conjecture. In 1669 in company with some missionaries he visited the country of the Senecas. The missionaries were mostly concerned with the souls of the savages, but we suspect that LaSalle was equally interested in finding the river Ohio, of which the indians had told him at his home in Quebec.

Life among the Senecas was not such that even the missionaries cared to stay long in their company, and so the party moved to the western end of Lake Ontario.

Here LaSalle met Joliet returning from an unsuccessful attempt to discover the copper mines of Lake Superior. (This was before Joliet and Marquette had made their famous visit to the upper Mississippi.) After talking with Joliet the missionaries concluded there was a better field of endeavor awaiting them on the upper lakes, but LaSalle palmed sickness and remained behind. The priests thought he would go down to Montreal as soon as he was able to travel, but Montreal did not fit into our adventurer's plans at all.

For two years LaSalle and those of the party who remained made numerous excursions throughout the country south of the lakes and in all probability made some very important discoveries, but unfortunately all records and maps of this expedition have disappeared. It seems, however, that he secured a guide from the Onondagas who conducted the party to the Ohio, down which they descended as far at least as the falls at Louisville.

Returning to Lake Erie, LaSalle is said to have proceeded by water to the Detroit river and from there on to Lake Huron, exploring the Michigan shores as he went, then crossing to Lake Michigan he passed over by the Chicago portage to the Illinois and from there on to the Mississippi. If this story be true LaSalle was on the Mississippi several years before Marquette and Joliet, but still a long time after Radisson and Groseilliers. There are many reasons for doubting this story. LaSalle himself never seems to have put forth this claim, and it was years later when some of his admirers claimed this honor for him. That he found and explored the Ohio for some distance seems to be generally conceded, but scant reliance should be placed upon the alleged Mississippi expedition.

The Jesuits were extremely busy at this time in building missions and exploring the country, fathers Allouez and Marquette being especially active in the work.

LaSalle returned for a time to his estate on the Saint Lawrence where he set about preparing an elaborate set of plans, gigantic in scope and purpose, which, had they succeeded, might have changed the whole subsequent history of Canada, and North America as well. Marquette's and Joliet's discovery of the Mississippi and the conclusion they had reached as to its emptying into the Gulf, fired him with the desire to win that river and the great valley it drained, for France. Prior discovery by DeSoto and the Spanish claims arising therefrom did not bother LaSalle. He would build a strong fort at the mouth of the river and people the valley with French colonists. Fur-traders might bicker and scheme and cheat and fight over the trade of the cold Canadian forests, the Jesuits might rule and christianize the indians of the Great Lake regions to their heart's content, he would cut loose from both and found a greater New France in the valley of the Mississippi, where neither trader nor priest should predominate.

The governor, Count Frontenac, entered heartily into his plans. The count was by far the ablest ruler French Canada ever had, and in the enterprising and courageous LaSalle he found a man after his own heart. LaSalle's first move was to build a fort at the western end of Lake Ontario, which he named after the governor. This fort was intended to turn aside the trade which had begun to flow down the Mohawk to the Dutch posts on the Hudson. He furthermore planned a fort at the falls of the Niagara to protect the portage at that place, and here, too, he expected to build some vessels with which to sail upon the upper lakes.

The French king approved of LaSalle's plans, but a storm of protest arose from both fur-traders and Jesuits. Traders saw, or pretended to see, in this movement a cutting off of much of their own trade and influence and the enrichment of rivals instead. The Jesuits also opposed their plans because they saw that the ultimate aim of these forts was not protection against the Iroquois or against rival Dutch and English traders, as was announced by the builders, but that through them and others that might be established later, the valleys of the Ohio and the Mississippi would pass into the control of Frontenac and LaSalle, and that as a consequence their dream of a second Paraguay in the Lake region, where docile christianized indians would meekly bow their heads to Jesuit rule, would vanish in thin air. LaSalle in possession of the country would be a stumbling block in their path. True, he was devoutly religious and had even been educated for the priesthood, but he was now a fur-trader and it was quite evident that he wished to see white settlers in the west, and settlers was something that neither Jesuit or fur-trader wished to see. Both preferred to see the west peopled by the indian and the beaver rather than by French settlers, forgetting that French colonists and homemakers alone could stay the ultimate western march of English settlers from the seaboard.

Fort Frontenac in LaSalle's hands became a formidable place. He replaced the wooden walls on the land side with walls of stone, added comfortable barracks and quarters for the officers, also a forge, a mill and a bakery. Nine cannon were mounted on the walls and bid defiance to all enemies of New France. A small garrison and a large force of farmers and workmen were maintained at the place.

In spite of the protests which came pouring in the French king, Louis XIV, not only granted all that LaSalle asked, but he went farther and gave permission not only to build the two forts asked for but as many others as he pleased. He also granted a monopoly in the trade in buffalo hides, but he did not favor a too extensive settlement of the great western valleys. Possibly he did not wish to see Canada depleted of population in order to form new settlements, and probably he too wished to see the west populated with indians and beaver, for the fur-trade was Canada's one source of wealth. A statement made by this same king some time later on seems to bear out this supposition: "I am persuaded," says the grand monarch, "that the discovery of the *Sieur de LaSalle* is very useless; and it is necessary, hereafter, to prevent similar enterprises, which can have no other result than to debauch the people by the hope of gain, and to diminish the revenue from the beaver." Perhaps, too, Louis feared the lawless independence so often exhibited by these men of the wilderness, once they had gotten so far away from the firm grasp of the authorities at Quebec.

LaSalle set about to raise a company to finance and carry out his projects. Frontenac in Canada lent him all possible aid, while in Paris he succeeded in enlisting the aid of several able gentlemen, among whom Henri de Tonti, an Italian, was to prove an invaluable assistant. Another remarkable man joined the company, the brave, resourceful but somewhat untruthful Father Hennepin.

In 1678, LaSalle and party established themselves at Niagara and built the first vessel ever constructed upon the upper lakes, naming it the Griffin in honor of Frontenac, whose coat of arms bore that device.

Early in 1679 the Griffin was finished and launched, and away the adventurers sailed up the river to Lake Erie, and on westward over its broad expanse. LaSalle was anxious to get away from Niagara, for enemies at Quebec and elsewhere had instigated his creditors to sieze all his property except the fort at Frontenac. Also his men were beginning to show signs of restlessness and dissatisfaction. It was time to be moving. Entering the Detroit river the party landed from time to time to kill game, which was exceedingly abundant along the banks. They feasted royally on bear meat and venison, and the good spirits of the crew were restored for a while.

On Lake Huron the Griffin encountered a storm which threatened to send them all to the bottom, even stout-hearted LaSalle seems to have despaired for a time, but by hard work they managed to keep the vessel afloat and finally reached the straits of Mackinac. The sight of the Jesuit establishment there was a most welcome one to the storm-tossed voyagers, but we doubt if there was much sincerity behind the welcome the traders of the place extended them. From the earliest times Mackinaw was a boisterous, lawless place, swarming with reckless free traders who, like the Jesuits, had very early recognized the strategic importance of the place. The huts of these traders surrounded the mission. Here the men who served God and the men who served Mammon only, plied their callings side by side.

LaSalle's men mingled freely with the rollicking traders on shore, and very soon he began to discover signs of a return of the dissatisfaction which had plagued him at Niagara. Some one was tampering with them again. He had intended to turn the command over to Tonti at this place while he went back to endeavor to

satisfy his creditors at Quebec, but owing to the attitude his men had assumed he did not dare to leave them, so he pushed on with the expedition into Lake Michigan and did a thriving business with the indians in that section, finding them plentifully supplied with furs.

The Griffin was soon laden with a most valuable cargo of peltries and LaSalle sent her back to Niagara, while with his men he proceeded to the Saint Joseph, where he built a fort. As we know, the Saint Joseph was joined with the Illinois river by a short portage, and this was the route LaSalle intended using in going to and from Canada to his projected settlements in the Mississippi valley. He seems not to have taken seriously the king's expressed wish that no considerable number of colonists be established in the far west.

Furious storms lashed the broad waters of Lake Michigan creating a terrible sea, and the voyageurs as they looked out over the seething tossing waters and recalled their experiences on Lake Huron, wondered how the Griffin was faring. Their apprehensions were well grounded, for nothing was ever heard of either the vessel or her crew. LaSalle waited at Saint Joseph in vain for the Griffin's return, and at last he became thoroughly convinced that the vessel was lost. It was a most serious blow, but instead of turning back he led his followers over to the Illinois and built Fort Crevecoeur. This post was the first establishment of the white man in the country drained by the Mississippi and its tributaries, it was the forerunner of the great teeming cities which now line the banks of those rivers.

Chapter VII
LaSalle on the Mississippi

LaSalle on the Mississippi

LaSalle was at length fully launched upon his long cherished plan of founding a French colony in the great interior valley of the continent. He had met with many hindrances, but none of them could turn him from his purpose. He was of the type of men who build empires. Neither plots or intrigues, seizure of property, complaints of followers or even the loss of the Griffin shook his firm resolve. It is well that he was made of such heroic material, for war, desertion, misfortune, failure and final assassination were to be his portion, but never do we find his courage faltering or his firm purpose shaken. He was to ultimately fail in all of his plans, but he left behind him a name which stands high on the list of explorers and heroes.

Having established himself on the Illinois, LaSalle thought it safe to turn the command over to Tonti and for himself to hurry back to Canada to attend to his affairs. Hurrying overland from Lake Michigan to the Detroit river, LaSalle struck across to Lake Erie, reaching the lake in the region of Point Pelee, where he built a canoe and proceeded by water to the fort at Niagara. Here he learned of new disasters. Not only had the Griffin been lost but the ship from France which was laden with his goods, amounting in all to twenty-two thousand livres, had been wrecked at the mouth of the Saint Lawrence. In addition to this, many of his men

had quit his employ and his rivals were unceasingly busy. Misfortunes were coming thick and fast. Discouraged but still undaunted, he hurried to Frontenac and from there on to Montreal, and soon succeeded in repairing his fortunes to some extent.

Scarcely had LaSalle succeeded in bringing his affairs in the east to a somewhat satisfactory shape when bad news came from the west. A messenger arrived bringing a letter from Tonti with the information that soon after his departure the men at Fort Crevecoeur had rebelled, burned the fort and made off with all the plunder they could carry. The deserters had also destroyed the fort on the Saint Joseph and seized a lot of LaSalle's furs at Michillimackinac, and the main party was now on Lake Ontario seeking for the harbor of Albany while others were hurrying on to Fort Frontenac, hoping to surprise and kill their commander there. With his usual promptitude LaSalle gathered around him those of his men who yet remained loyal, and intercepting the mutineers and would-be murderers he took them all prisoners and clapped them in jail.

Hurrying to the Illinois country LaSalle anxiously searched for his faithful lieutenant, but Tonti was nowhere to be found. He was not surprised to find both his forts in ruins, for he had been apprised of this misfortune in Tonti's letter, but he was agreeably surprised to find the boat they had been building for the descent of the Mississippi but little injured.

The anxiety of the searchers was increased when they came upon evidences of an Iroquois raid. The once smiling valley of the Illini was a blackened waste. Blackened ruins and bleaching bones were everywhere. The tomahawk, the arrow and the fire brand had gotten

in their awful work, but what bothered LaSalle most was the absence of his men. Could Tonti, and the few who remained faithful to him, have perished in this general massacre? Everywhere he went searching and inquiring of the few miserable natives who had managed to escape the general ruin that had come upon their nation, but no tidings of the missing men came to relieve his anxiety. Winter quarters were taken up on the Saint Joseph, and we can imagine how sad and gloomy that encampment must have been. At last came the welcome news that Tonti was safe among the Pottawattomies, and in the following May the two men were reunited once more.

After the mutiny, Tonti and those who remained faithful took up their abode among the Illinois. Then came the Iroquois invasion with its whirlwind of fire and slaughter. After vainly trying to patch up a peace between the Illinois and their enemies and getting wounded for his pains, Tonti and his men moved northward to the region of Green Bay and took refuge among the Pottawattomies.

Before leaving Fort Crevecoeur for his journey back to Canada, LaSalle had sent the egotistic and talkative priest, Hennepin, with two companions to explore the Illinois to its junction with the Mississippi, and from there he was to proceed on up that stream toward its source. Hennepin obeyed orders until he was made prisoner by the Sioux, and his further progress brought to a halt. His principal exploit had been the discovery of the falls of Saint Anthony but later on his ready pen claimed much more to his credit, but Hennepin's writings have gained for him little more than the reputation of being a colossal liar.

Meanwhile the daring leader of the *coureurs de bois*, Daniel Greysolon DuLuth, had crossed over from Lake Superior to the Saint Croix, down which he had floated to the Mississippi. Hearing of three white men among the indians farther down the river and fearing that it might be Englishmen or Spaniards poaching on French territory he hurried forward to ascertain the truth of the matter. Hennepin and his comrades were of course glad to be released from their captivity, and followed DuLuth across the Wisconsin portage to Lake Michigan and from thence on down to Quebec. From Canada, Hennepin hurried over to France to publish an account of the wonderful things he had done, and incidentally a great deal that he did not do, with the result that very little credence is now placed upon any of his statements.

Late in December, 1682, LaSalle was ready for his long deferred trip down the Mississippi. He had given up his first idea of traveling in one large vessel and instead embarked his men in canoes. At first their progress was somewhat hindered by blocks of floating ice, but the farther southward they went the more pleasant the weather became. They passed the mouth of the Missouri, with its flood of yellow waters pouring in from the westward and discoloring the hitherto clear, blue waters of the Mississippi into a dirty brown throughout the rest of its course. The mouth of the Ohio was next passed, and soon after the party landed at Chickasaw Bluffs to replenish their larder with wild game.

A small stockade was built at the Bluffs and given the name of Fort Prud'homme. A small guard was left at this place while the remainder reëmbarked and floated on down to the Arkansas, where they visited an indian

village where the chief was persuaded to acknowledge vassalage to France. Visits were made also to the villages of the Natchez and other tribes further on. Early in April they reached the mouth of the great river and gazed out over the peaceful expanse of the Mexican gulf. It was an auspicious moment for them all, the mystery of the magnificent river had been cleared up, and they were the ones who had accomplished the task. The arms of France were set up upon the shore, and the land declared the property of Louis XIV under the name of Louisiana.

The journey upstream was far more laborious than the downward journey had been, when all one had to do was to drift with the current. Also the indians proved more troublesome than on the downward trips, while provisions ran alarmingly low. To make matters worse, LaSalle took violently ill and had to be left at Fort Prud'homme to recover, while Tonti proceeded on with the party. It was September before LaSalle was able to rejoin his lieutenant at Michillimackinac.

LaSalle was much gratified with the success of his Mississippi voyage, although from a money point of view it had proved a dead loss. His original intention of using one large vessel and collecting a cargo of furs on the trip had been abandoned, and the canoes he had substituted were too small to carry furs along with the men and the supplies, and the trading part of the expedition had been abandoned. LaSalle's hope was to establish a post near the mouth of the Mississippi and use the sea for direct communication with France, thus cutting loose from Canada altogether.

At a high cliff on the banks of the Illinois, called by the indians, Starved Rock, LaSalle and Tonti built a

fort which they named Saint Louis, in honor of their French master. Here at this miniature Quebec the two thought to establish themselves in the Illinois country once again. Again disaster awaited LaSalle. Frontenac no longer governed at Quebec and the new governor, unfriendly to his plans, seized Fort Frontenac and sent one of his officers to supersede LaSalle on the Illinois. LaSalle was on his way to Quebec when he met this officer and learned what his errand was, but smothering his resentment he sent word to Tonti to receive the man well, while he proceeded to France to lay his case directly before the king.

LaSalle reached France at an opportune time. Spain had forbidden vessels of any other nation to sail on the Gulf of Mexico, and in enforcing this demand she had seized certain vessels that had ventured into those waters. The grand monarch could not submit to this extravagant claim of the Spaniards and was planning the sending of warships to protect French nationals in those parts, and in addition he contemplated the building of a fort somewhere on the Gulf coast. All this fitted nicely into LaSalle's plans. As Louis now saw the necessity of establishing French colonists in the great valley if he intended to retain his hold on the country, LaSalle asked to be allowed to found a colony there, and he even proposed to conquer the northern portions of Mexico should he be allowed to raise a company of two-hundred men, these to be trained for six months at the king's expense. He also asked for a small vessel of thirty guns and a few cannon for his proposed fort.

Louis was in a generous mood, and gave the explorer all he asked and more. A naval vessel, the *July*, thirty-six guns, a small-armed vessel, a store ship and a ketch

were furnished. The naval force was placed under the command of Captain Beaujeu, much to LaSalle's displeasure, for he did not like a divided command. On land, however, he was to have sole authority. The king also ordered the Canadian authorities to restore everything they had seized from LaSalle at Fort Frontenac and elsewhere.

Quarrels between LaSalle and Beaujeu began almost at once, and continued from the time the expedition set sail from Rochelle until it reached America. Stopping at Saint Domingo enroute for supplies, LaSalle was taken dangerously ill, and this discouragement was further added to by malicious or misinformed persons who represented the land to which they were bound in a most unfavorable manner. The quarrels between the two commanders continued to rage fiercely.

Sailing westward from Saint Domingo, they missed the mouth of the Mississippi and passed on westwardly along the coast. LaSalle was fooled by the lagoons at Matagorda bay into thinking that he had found the Mississippi, little dreaming that the river of his quest lay hundreds of miles to the eastward.

Quarreling and sickness followed the landing at Matagorda. In attempting to enter one of the lagoons the store ship was hopelessly wrecked, and only a portion of the cargo could be saved. The indians also annoyed them considerably. It seemed as though man and nature had joined forces against the explorers. LaSalle and Beaujeu were still at loggerheads, and the latter finally sailed away, leaving the land forces to get along as best they could.

Excursions in all directions finally convinced LaSalle that he was nowhere near the mouth of the Mississippi,

but he concluded that the best thing he could do was to safeguard his present position by building a fort for shelter and protection. Provisions were low, and existence was kept up by constant hunting and fishing. Sickness was rife and the little graveyard grew amazingly. Discipline was lax. Little by little LaSalle was losing his hold on his unruly crew, and now came as a crowning calamity the loss of his remaining vessel and the loss also of the greater part of the crew. There was but one thing to do if he wished to save the remainder of his men from death by starvation and sickness on that inhospitable shore, and that was to proceed to the Illinois country without delay.

It must have cost LaSalle quite a bit in pride to thus abandon his long cherished undertaking and give the order for the northward march, but there was no help for it. Day after day they marched on; dark, silent forests hemmed them in sometimes for days at a time; again they wandered over wide stretches of sunny, treeless plains, teeming with game. Under other conditions the journey would not have proven an unpleasant one, but LaSalle was sick at heart over the failure of his plans, and his men were so discouraged and homesick that we can easily imagine that everyone was gloomy enough.

Buffalo were everywhere and proved a blessing for the travelers, furnishing them with both food and clothing. They also made rude "bull boats" of the hides, which they used in crossing the streams. The men grew more and more insolent as they struggled on, blaming all their misfortunes on their brave commander. At length several of them by watching their chance when he was away from the main body, shot him down and

left his body for the wolves and vultures. The mutineers succeeded in intimidating those who had remained loyal to their leader, and continued to run things to their own notions.

At last the party reached the Arkansas and were overjoyed to find an indian village with a tall crucifix standing in the center. This was an unmistakable sign of the presence of white men, and soon after several Frenchmen made their appearance. The faithful Tonti had gone down the Mississippi from his post in Illinois to meet his chief at the mouth of the great river. Not finding him there he had retraced his way to the Illinois, leaving several men on the Arkansas to be on the lookout for LaSalle. Concealing the fact that they had murdered their leader the party made haste to reach the Illinois and thence on to the Saint Lawrence and home. Thus ended in failure LaSalle's great plans for a French colony in the interior of the continent.

Chapter VIII

Beginning of the Hudson's Bay Company

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The destruction of the Hurons and the scattering of others of the western indian nations by the Iroquois caused a very serious falling off in the trade of Montreal, Quebec, and other headquarters of the fur-trade. Then the trade began to pick up again, but now the bulk of the furs began to come in from the north instead of the west. Down the Ottawa, the Saint Maurice, the Saguenay and other rivers coming down out of the North country, or *pays den haut* as the trappers called that region, glided fleets of indian canoes, laden with the finest of furs. The traders made inquiry concerning this land of plenty. They already knew of the existence of the great bay that Hudson had discovered and explored, but as yet no one had reached it overland from the Saint Lawrence, and in consequence adventurous souls were longing for permission to find this great bay and share in the harvest of fur the region offered.

Among those who coveted a share of this northern trade and whose appetite for adventure was as strong as their desire for gain, were our old acquaintances, Radisson and Groseilliers, the discoverers of the upper Mississippi. They had gathered much information from the indians in former journeys, and they burned with the desire to be the first on the great bay of the north, just as they had been the first to stand on the banks of the great river of the west.

A mixed party of Jesuits and traders started up the Saguenay with the object of searching for the bay. They had been given permission by the French governor to carry on these explorations, but when Radisson and his companion sought a similar permit they were told that they might obtain the desired permission if they would promise to turn over half of the furs obtained. In attempting to procure better terms they only outraged the governor, who thereupon forbade them to go on any terms whatever.

Neither Radisson nor Groseilliers were noted for paying strict regard to the laws or the orders of their superiors, and they did not propose to be balked in their desires this time. The wilds were calling, and they obeyed the call rather than the orders of the governor. With a few indian companions they stole forth from Three Rivers at night and paddled up the Saint Lawrence and on westward to Lake Superior. Some distance to the westward of this great inland sea they erected the first fur-post in the far northwest. This tiny fort was triangular in shape, with rough log walls thatched over with the branches of trees and furnished in the rudest manner imaginable. Here the trapper-explorers spent the long, lonely winter.

Instead of maintaining guard through the long winter nights they arranged a system of wires about the walls which were attached to bells inside the fort. These were expected to arouse the trappers should anything come in contact with the wires during the night. No human foe molested them but wild animals occasionally blundered into the wires and started the alarm bells jingling. Indians came and went at intervals but they always found the white men on guard.

When the weather began to moderate they visited a village of Crees and found them starving. Their hunting had been unsuccessful and starvation was the result. The two Frenchmen shared their misery until a change in the weather brought game into the country again and relieved their needs.

Meeting with the Sioux, the traders made a treaty with those indians, and Radisson traveled extensively in their country. We would be glad to know the nature and extent of these travels, but have no way of finding out.

Similar uncertainty attends their dash toward Hudson's Bay. It appears that they crossed the divide and descended a river to salt water, which, if correct, could be nothing less than Hudson's Bay. There has been much controversy over this expedition, and the facts of the case may never be satisfactorily decided.

Returning to Canada with a cargo of furs worth \$300,000 they were arrested, fined heavily, and Sieur de Groseilliers was even imprisoned for a time. When all was settled up the two friends had barely \$20,000 left of their valuable cargo of pelts. They would have fared far better had they complied with the governor's offer, unreasonable as it had seemed at the time.

Other men had sought to explore Hudson's Bay. In 1612, Thomas Button had explored Baffin land and Nelson river; in 1619, the mouth of the Churchill was discovered by a Dane named Munck; James and Fox in 1631, Shapleigh in 1640, and Bourbon in 1656 – seven explorers in all, had made discoveries of more or less importance, but no permanent posts had been established on those waters as yet. Both English and French fur-traders coveted possession of this great fur store-

house and Radisson and Groseilliers, aware of this fact, and smarting from the injustice of the French authorities, resolved to desert to the English.

In Port Royal, Nova Scotia, the adventurers met Zachariah Gillem, a sea captain of Boston, who offered his ship for a voyage to Hudson's Bay, but the season was so far advanced that nothing came of the voyage. Two vessels were chartered for a voyage during the succeeding year, but one of the ships was wrecked while going to fish at the Grand Banks and the traders were held up by a lawsuit in consequence, and it was August (1665) before they finally got away to England with Sir George Cartwright to plan the establishment of a trading post on the bay. On the way they fell into the hands of a Dutch captain and the Frenchmen were dumped ashore in Spain.

Reaching England, at last, their plans found favor at court and that soldier of fortune, Prince Rupert, was especially interested. The adventurous life of the fur-traders and the wealth which the business held forth appealed to the Prince, and he entered heartily into the schemes of the Frenchmen.

In 1668, two vessels were sent out to America. Groseilliers sailing with Gillem in, the *Nonsuch*, came to anchor in the bay on August 4, at a point which he and Radisson are supposed to have reached on their overland expedition five years before. Here they erected a post and here they wintered, loading their vessel with a valuable cargo of furs. Radisson had sailed on the other vessel, had been driven back to London by a gale and had to postpone his visit to America, but our enterprising Frenchman improved the time of his enforced idleness by wooing and wedding Mary Kirk. He was

also often in council with Prince Rupert formulating plans for the future.

In 1670 a royal charter was granted to the "Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay," and thus was launched that famous organization known as the Hudson's Bay Company, which is still doing business in the frozen regions about the great bay, and whose posts are still the only sign of civilization in those regions. It has the distinction of being the oldest united company in the world.

Prince Rupert was made first governor with headquarters in England and Charles Bayley was appointed resident governor on the bay. Radisson and Groseilliers were on the bay in 1671 aiding their English friends in establishing posts at favorable points and trafficking with the indians for their furs. The new posts were named Fort Nelson, later York, Fort Albany, Fort Hayes and Fort Rupert. All was progressing nicely when a band of Frenchmen under Charles Abanel appeared on the bay. The English suspected and even openly accused Radisson and Groseilliers of treachery. The situation became so uncomfortable that the two men deserted and went over to their countrymen again.

A rival company had been organized by the French at Quebec to compete with the English on the bay. This new company was named the Company of the North, and our two adventurers were soon enlisted in its employ. Two vessels were placed under their orders and sent to the bay. After a stormy voyage they reached the western shore of the bay and built a fort. Here Radisson met a party of illicit traders from Boston and a large party of Hudson's Bay men. By making use of a bit of skillful diplomacy Radisson outwitted and took

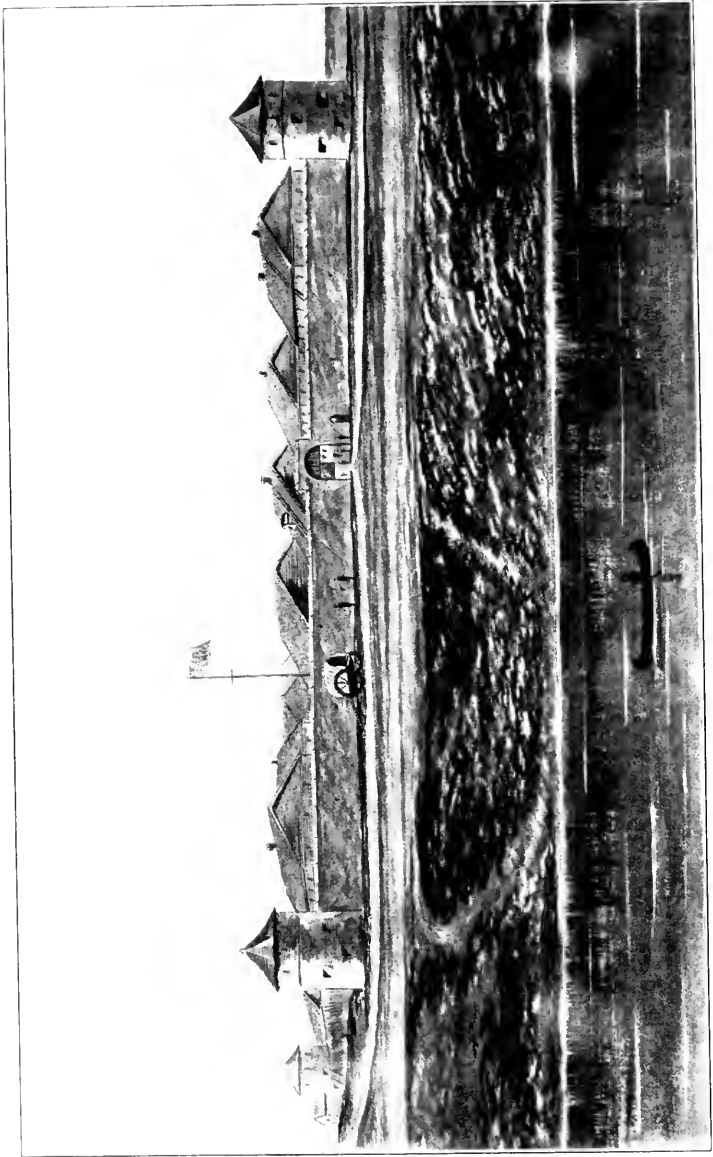
both parties prisoners, though either party outnumbered his own.

The ease with which our two friends could transfer allegiance from one crown to another, led to their being suspected and mistrusted by both. They found their rights ignored at Quebec to such an extent that Groseilliers retired entirely from trade, while Radisson turned over his post on the bay to the Hudson's Bay Company and again took service under the English, much to the disgust of the men of his command.

Although at this time England and France were at peace, the Canadian traders resolved to make a grand effort to rout the English from the bay. The governor of Canada sent Chevalier de Troyes from Montreal with some eighty men to take possession of all the British posts. Among them went Pierre le Moyne d'Iberville, the future founder of the Louisiana colony. This party ascended the Ottawa and from thence overland to Fort Hayes, which they took by surprise. Hurrying on to Fort Rupert they surprised and captured that post also, as well as a vessel which was lying at anchor nearby. Eight Englishmen were killed at Rupert, the rest becoming prisoners. As both Hayes and Rupert were well built forts, their easy capture can only be explained by the surprise and the suddenness of the attack.

The victors now marched upon Fort Albany, but the garrison there had been apprised of the doings of the French and a surprise was impossible. Nevertheless they were compelled to hang out the white flag when the invaders trained the ten captured cannon from Hayes and Rupert upon the walls of Fort Albany and completely riddled the place with balls.

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EXTERIOR VIEW OF FORT GARRY
From a photograph made in 1869

The success of the French on the bay was hailed with delight at Quebec and with exasperation in the English colonies. Both England and France ordered their American representatives to keep the peace, although we imagine that Louis XIV was secretly delighted with what Troyes had done.

The ousting of the English from Hudson's Bay was only temporary. They returned, rebuilt their ruined forts, and affairs went on again in the same way as before. More forts were added as time went on, and ere long the blood-red banner, with the magical H. B. C. in white lettering emblazoned upon it, was seen at all advantageous points throughout the whole of that vast region of ice and snow – and furs.

Two ships from England visited the bay each summer, bringing in supplies and taking out cargoes of furs. York Factory and Moose Factory were stopping places for these vessels, and their arrival was the great event of the year. Then only was mail received from or sent to friends in distant England. There was much revelry and jollifying on these occasions.

The French traders never fully agreed to the surrendering of the Hudson's Bay to the English, and from time to time daring voyageurs dashed into the region and seized and pillaged rival traders.

In May, 1697, England and France now being at war, Pierre le Moyne d'Iberville and his brother, Serigny, led five French ships against the English on the bay. Becoming separated from the other ships of his fleet Iberville found his vessel alone in the presence of three English vessels, carrying fifty-two, thirty-six and thirty-two guns respectively. His own ship, the Pelican, carried but forty-four, nevertheless Iberville hazarded

an engagement. One English vessel was sunk, one surrendered, and the third sought safety in flight—quite a contrast from the usual results of naval battles between the two nations.

A furious storm now arose and Iberville's ship was wrecked, but most of the crew got ashore in safety. The missing ships now came up and men, cannon and stores were put ashore for an attack on Fort Nelson, the principal post of the English traders. On land, Iberville was quite as successful as he had been on the water, and after a brief bombardment the English surrendered.

All these successes availed the conquerors but little. European treaties restored American conquests, and once more the English returned to their battered forts and reopened trade with the natives. Snugly quartered in their stations at Fort Nelson (or York Factory), Fort Prince of Wales, Fort Rupert and other strategic points they more than held their own against rivals, and ruled over a realm larger than that of any European nation, and their rule was as autocratic and absolute as that of the czar of Russia himself.

Chapter IX

Count Vérendrye and the Discovery of the Rockies

Count Vérendrye and the Discovery of the Rockies

It is one of the strange facts of history that many of the great discoveries made by explorers have been made by them while searching for something else. Columbus discovered America while seeking Asia; his Spanish successors roamed hither and yon in search of fountains of youth, golden cities and rich empires to plunder. Sometimes, like Cortez and Pizarro, they were successful; more often, like DeLeon, DeSoto and Coronado, they failed in the objects of their journeys, and placed little or no value upon the discoveries they did make. In seeking a water route to Asia, Hudson had discovered the great bay that now bears his name. English and French seamen had made many additions to geographical knowledge after Hudson's day, but none found the water route to the Orient which was the object of their searchings. Now another valuable discovery was to be made by a gallant Frenchman, who was endeavoring to open a land route across to Pacific waters.

French priests, traders and voyageurs had pushed far into the unknown wilds to the west and southwest from Lake Superior. Following in the wake of the Radisson, Perrot, Du Luth, Hennepin and LaSalle explorations, LeSueur made two excursions into the Sioux country, and returning to France had persuaded the

king to grant him a monopoly on the fur-trade of those regions. He sailed for the mouth of the Mississippi, where Iberville had established a colony, following out the plans of the great LaSalle.

In 1700, LeSueur led a party up the river into the Sioux country. On the way they met an English trader from Carolina, showing that even at this early day there was rivalry between the traders of the two nations on the great river as well as on the great bay to the north. The travelers suffered much from hunger until relieved by the missionaries on the Illinois. These black-robed priests of New France came close behind the fur-clad traders and trappers in the discovery and opening up of new lands. It is to these two classes that we are indebted for the discovery of our great west.

LeSueur found Perrot established in a fort at Lake Pepin, which he had built about five years before. Continuing on the travelers came to the Saint Peter, and this they ascended to Blue Earth river, where they established themselves. Two years later a part of the men went down the Mississippi to Louisiana with a goodly cargo of valuable furs. A small party was left behind to hold the fort, but they soon grew discouraged and followed the others down the river.

Small parties of hardy Canadian woods-rangers moved constantly about over the interior of the country, even pushing far up the turbid Missouri. They brought back many kinds of reports, but one which aroused the greatest interest was that of the existence of a river which had its head near the source of the Missouri and ran on down to the Spanish settlements on the Pacific, or western sea as it was then called.

To ascertain how much fact there was in these rumors

Juchereau de Saint Denis, in 1714, set out toward the west, but going up the Red river instead of the Missouri. Spain kept a jealous eye ever open for poachers on her domains, or on lands she claimed to own, and the Frenchmen were soon seized and their expedition broken up. In 1719, LaHarpe started out from Natchitoches on an excursion into unknown regions, but he discovered nothing of importance, while Du Tisne led another party up the Missouri as far as Grand river, but the indians refused him permission to proceed beyond that place.

Vast as was the continent of North America, European nations were jealous of all rivalry, even though on the vast plains and far-reaching fertile valleys there was land enough and space enough to take care of their overflow populations for centuries to come. England and France were engaged in a rivalry in the north and east which could, and did, end only when one of the rivals was vanquished ; Spain on her part had wiped out the French settlements in Florida with a savageness even remarkable for her, and now she saw the hated Frenchman once more menacing her borders, and so she resolved to expel them from the Mississippi country as well.

In 1721 a force of two-hundred men from New Mexico marched eastward to expel the French, but they never reached the French settlements for the indians, not relishing Spanish intruders any better than the latter did the French, fell upon this army and completely put it to rout. Anticipating further hostile moves on the part of Spain, Bourgmont led a party of French to a point above Grand river and there built a fort. The French and indians got along well together, and further

danger from the Spaniards was soon an improbability.

The French fur-trader was the explorer of all western North America, as far as the Rockies. Go where you will beyond the Mississippi and Lake Superior and you will find French names given to lakes, rivers and towns, showing that he had been there in advance of his Anglo-saxon rivals. His little trading posts became the sites of later cities, and while he failed to make good his claim he has left the impress of his presence upon the nomenclature of the entire region. English and American explorers but followed in the wake of the adventurous Frenchman and profited by his endeavors.

The overland search for a road to the Pacific began in earnest in June, 1731, when Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de la Vérendrye and his sons, a nephew Jemerais and a party of Canadians set out from Montreal to endeavor to unravel the mystery.

Vérendrye had been a gallant soldier in the wars of Louis XIV and had been desperately wounded at Malplaquet. Later on he had come over to America, and like all other adventurers of that day he was soon engaged in the fur-trade. In 1728, he was in charge of a small post at Lake Nipigon, and here an indian chief regaled him with tales of a great western lake which discharged its waters into salt water. Vérendrye very naturally concluded that this salt water must be the Western Sea, and his ambition was fired for its discovery.

His appeal to the king was unheeded, but better luck attended his efforts among the merchants of Canada. These men had seen scantily supplied traders plunge into the western wilds only to emerge later on with a fortune in furs. By sending out a large and well-

equipped expedition they reasoned that the fortunes of all could be easily made. In reasoning thus the merchants failed to take into consideration that in a joint exploring and trading expedition one or the other objects would possibly be slighted, and that with a man seeking glory rather than wealth, the trade would very likely be the one neglected.

Vérendrye set out well-supplied with necessities for his expedition, and a still more liberal supply of promises of future aid. He was to learn to his sorrow and loss just how unstable such promises were to prove. Vérendrye left Montreal with much pomp and circumstance in June, 1731, and by August was at the grand portage which connects the western tributaries of Lake Superior with those of Lake Winnipeg. Here so much valuable time was lost that they were obliged to erect winter quarters. They named their post Fort Saint Pierre.

Time after time Vérendrye was forced to return to Montreal to hurry up supplies or obtain additional aid, and in the meantime was doing much toward stopping the flow of furs toward the English posts on Hudson's Bay by establishing French posts at strategic points. Fort Saint Pierre on Rainy lake, Fort Saint Charles on Lake of the Woods, Fort Maurepas and Fort Bourbon on Lake Winnipeg, Fort La Reine on the Assiniboine and Fort Dauphin on Lake Manitoba. All this took time, and we can imagine how Vérendrye chafed at the delay. Misfortunes multiplied, the brave and efficient Jemerais died, many of the men were dissatisfied and all but openly mutinous, and as a crowning disaster Jean Vérendrye, the count's eldest son, with twenty men, was surprised and killed by Sioux. Still the brave com-

mander held on to his original intention of crossing over the continent to the Pacific.

Vérendrye relied much upon indian information and this, as usual, was misleading. They assured him that the Mandans on the Missouri could show him the way to the western sea and so in October, 1738, having, as he thought, firmly established himself in the country, Vérendrye set out with twenty men for the Mandan country. Pushing up the Assiniboine as far as the rapids in bark canoes, the party landed and marched overland to the Mandan villages on the Missouri. Here again misfortune befell him. His interpreter had become enamored with an Assiniboine beauty and deserted to follow after the girl. Also the bag of presents, so vitally necessary in dealings with indians, was lost.

There was nothing to do but retrace their steps to Fort La Reine, which they did, leaving, however, two men in the villages to learn the language. These men remained with the Mandans something like seven months, studying the language and traveling about with them, with ears always alert to catch information of the western sea. Finally they came across a man who told them of a salt lake to the westward, beside which dwelt men with beards, who sang from books and repeated Jesus Maria. Evidently this man had in some manner heard of the Spaniards in California. The man said the French might be able to reach these people before winter set in, although they would have to make a wide detour to the south to avoid a warlike tribe called the Snakes. Vérendrye sent one of his sons, Pierre, to pursue this discovery, but the young man returned the next summer baffled.

Disregarding former failures, in the spring of 1742

Pierre and Chevalier Vérendrye were sent forth by their father to continue the search. These two brave boys, with only two Frenchmen as followers, left La Reine in April and proceeded at once to the Mandan villages. It soon became clear that these indians did not know the way to the sea they were seeking, but they told of a tribe of Horse indians who could guide them thither and from whom they were expecting a visit very soon. The Frenchmen waited until midsummer for the arrival of the expected guests, sharing the hospitality of the Mandans, living with them in their great dome-shaped mud huts and watching, perhaps sharing in, their rude sports and games, but inwardly chafing all the time at the delay.

Finally with a party of Mandans the Frenchmen set out in hopes of meeting up with the Horse indians. They passed through the region bounded on the north by the Missouri and on the south by the Black Hills, saw the dreary wastes and fantastically carved buttes of the Bad Lands, saw the great herds of elk and sheep, were nightly serenaded by bands of wolves, met with various tribes of indians, and finally to their joy ran across the very indians for whom they were in search.

The Horse indians, contrary to report, had no guides to lead the white men to the Pacific, but, indian-like, they said that another tribe, the Bow indians, could take them to within a short distance of the sea, so following up this will-o'-the-wisp quest they set out to find the Bow indians, which tribe was possibly a part of the great Sioux nation.

The Bow indians were found preparing for a war of extermination against the Snakes. The Vérendrye's joined the war party and on June 1, 1743, came in sight

of the Big Horn range of the Rocky mountains. A camp was established and here the women and children were to remain, while the warriors carried terror into the land of the Snakes. Pierre accompanied the war party, while his brother remained in camp to guard the baggage. Two weeks later Pierre stood at the foot of the Rockies, that great mountain wall which was to bar both he and his countrymen from the Pacific forever. He was the first white man, so far as we know, to gaze upon the great range in the northern part of the continent, although the Spaniards were already familiar with the same range farther to the southward. Pierre wished to scale this mountain wall to see what was beyond, or at least to ascend one of the higher peaks to obtain a view of the sea. Little did he dream that one thousand miles of mountains, plains and deserts still separated him from the object of his search. But he was denied even this small consolation, for as the warriors had not found the Snakes it suddenly dawned upon them that perhaps the Snakes had received warning of their approach and had circled around them to attack their women and children at the encampment, so back they fled in the midst of a howling blizzard. Everything was found just as they had left it in camp, no Snakes had put in their appearance, and their fears had been groundless, but the scare had taken the wire-edge off their fighting spirit and they headed back toward their own country. The Vérendryes could do nothing else but follow, and thus ended their search for the Pacific.

The remainder of Vérendrye's story is but a repetition of LaSalle. Misfortune continued to dog his steps. Enemies in the rear thwarted and ruined all his plans, and in the end he lost all that he possessed.

Chapter X

English Supremacy - Hearne's Explorations

English Supremacy - Hearne's Explorations

The latter half of the eighteenth century was to witness changes of tremendous importance to French Canada and to the English colonies along the Atlantic seaboard. The rival nations were nearing the final struggle which was to decide, not alone who was to retain supremacy in the fur-trade of Hudson's Bay or of the great valleys of the interior, but which of the two peoples were to rule supreme on the continent—such were the gigantic stakes for which each nation was playing.

Much blood had already been shed in futile warfare, but as yet nothing was settled, except that England of all her conquests clung fast to Acadia alone. English and Colonial troops had taken Louisbourg and Quebec, and had hoisted their flags on those rocky fortresses, but diplomacy restored what valor won, and these strongholds were given back to France. The Canadians on their part had swept the English from Hudson's Bay, but with the return of peace the English traders were allowed to come back, and their crimson banner was again raised over all the battered forts. France claimed the Ohio valley by virtue of LaSalle's discovery, but English traders invaded that region and established themselves there. On every hand the two rivals met and quarreled. This condition of affairs could not last forever.

A trifling skirmish between a band of Virginians under George Washington, and some indians and Frenchmen under a partisan leader named Beaujeu precipitated the crisis. War followed; Europe was drenched with blood, while in America the rivals fought to a finish. The Canadians, with the few French troops that could be sent to their aid, put up a most heroic fight, but they were hopelessly outnumbered. On the Plains of Abraham before Quebec, Montcalm and Wolfe fought the famous battle in which both commanders lost their lives and Louis XIV, all of his American possessions.

France lost because she had pursued a mistaken policy in regard to America. She had wished to govern too much, and had fatally hampered the colonization of Canada. Two things were almost foremost in the minds of Louis and his advisors, the establishment of the catholic faith, with the total exclusion of all other forms of worship, and the establishing of a monopoly on the fur-trade, which was made almost the sole occupation of the Canadians. In upholding the hands of the Jesuits, Louis was encouraging the establishment of a religious tyranny in Canada, more rigorous than that of the home-land. In granting monopolies to a favored few was to stifle trade and commerce. Few catholics wished to become colonists in a land where there were neither religious or commercial advantages to be gained, and by prohibiting protestants from settling in the colony, the king was holding back the only class of people who wished to emigrate. No wonder the colony languished. The energy and enterprise of New France, chafing under restrictions, broke loose from all restraint and took to the woods, becoming *coureurs de bois* and voy-

ageurs – splendid pathfinders and trail-blazers, but poor colonists or home builders.

Southward all along the Atlantic coast compact English colonies were growing up in healthful neglect from the home government. Individuality, enterprise and initiative were given free reign. As a result these colonies prospered and grew, and while no such record of exploration and trail-blazing enriches their annals as they do those of the French colony, they were builders and they built solidly and well. In attempting to grasp a continent, the French neglected to establish a solid base in their rear. The slower-moving Englishman consolidated his power as he advanced, and when the time came he had only to reach forward and the prize was his.

The fall of New France left the Hudson's Bay Company masters of the fur-trade field for the time being. The French traders were disorganized and discouraged by defeat, but eventually they took heart again, reorganized their ranks, and before long the English traders were awakened from their drowsy life by a rivalry that threatened their very existence. Thinking themselves at last secure from rivalry after the successful ending of the French war, the Hudson's Bay traders lay at slothful ease at their scattered posts along the shores of the bay and waited for the indians to come to them with their furs. The indian was charged an exorbitant price for everything he purchased, paying for each article many times its value in furs. It was a time of golden harvest for the traders. The beaver skin became the currency of the region, and "skin for skin" became the motto of the company and was emblazoned on its coat of arms. The value of everything was reck-

oned in beaver skins, just as beads had been a basis of trade among the indians.

The first intimation that this easy existence could not last forever had come when Vérendrye turned a goodly part of the trade away from them by establishing his forts at Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg. French voyageurs still remained in the country, and gradually their rivalry began to be felt once more. Back in England folk began to ask what England had gained through all the support she had given to the company. What had the traders done to extend English sovereignty in exchange for the liberal charter that had been granted them? All the knowledge of the west and northwest that had been gained had come from French sources. It was time for the ancient company to wake up, and wake up it did.

In 1769, the Hudson's Bay governor at Fort Prince of Wales, Moses Norton, sent out an expedition under Samuel Hearne to find if possible the Coppermine river, which was supposed to connect with a northwest water-passage to Asia.

Early one cold November while the stars were still visible in the frosty sky Hearne, with two white servants and a small band of indian guides, issued forth from the gates of the fort and turned his face toward the unknown. There was a salute of cannon from the fort, a tingling of bells and creaking of harness as the husky dogs dashed forward with their heavily-laden sleds. There was a crunching sound of snow under the feet of dogs and men, a cracking of whips, and then silence settled down over the lonely place once more.

Day after day the party struggled through snow drifts and frozen swamps, facing a cruel, cutting north

wind which stung their faces like a whip lash. As they advanced, food and fuel grew scarce, and they suffered much from cold and hunger in consequence. Progress was slow, about ten miles a day being the average march. When game was killed the indians gorged themselves to repletion, taking no thought whatever of needs of the morrow. Hearne's authority was set at naught, and one morning the party arose to find that the guides had deserted during the night. Several indians always went in advance of the party and deliberately scared off all game in hopes of compelling Hearne to turn back. This plan failing, they plundered the sleighs one night and marched off with the booty. There was nothing for the white men to do but go back to the fort.

By February 23, 1770, Hearne was ready again for another attempt. With two white servants, three Chipewas and two Cree guides he once more set forth, this time on snow shoes, for at this period of the year that north country is buried under mountains of snow. They carried few provisions, depending mainly on the game they could shoot or snare. Fuel was scarce and only the smallest fire could be maintained, around which the little band huddled all the long night through for warmth, while outside the frail sides of their rude wigwam the cold Arctic winds moaned and shrieked, and overhead the northern lights flashed and crackled like an aerial prairie fire.

At times they were out of food for days, but always game was secured in the nick of time to ward off starvation. Even the rank flesh of a lean old musk-ox, which at any other time would have been repulsive, was greedily devoured and enjoyed. It took grit to proceed under such obstacles, but Hearne had the necessary grit.

With spring came the caribou, marching in vast herds like buffalo, and covering the landscape as far as eye could reach. The question of food no longer bothered them, but new troubles arose. The indians stole much of his ammunition and some of his survey instruments. He could now take no observations at the Arctic circle without these instruments, so for a second time he retraced his steps to Fort Prince of Wales, reaching that post in November, 1770.

There was a brave and reliable chief who came frequently to the fort and who also had somewhat of a reputation as an explorer himself, who now came forward and offered his services to Hearne, and as a result in less than two weeks that persevering explorer was headed northward once more. With Hearne went Matonabee the chief, with a small party of warriors and one woman. They traveled as before on snow shoes and as before they suffered severely from hunger and cold; also they were relieved by the appearance of vast herds of caribou.

At length they came to a small river which Matonabee assured Hearne was the Coppermine or "Fur-off-Metal-river" of his quest, and the latter at once realized that he had run down another myth concerning a north-west water route to Asia.

Bands of indians kept coming up from time to time and joining the party, and as they continued to advance they grow more cautious in their movements. Hearne was convinced that something was afoot, but he could get no satisfaction out of the stoical Matonabee and his followers. They were now in the land of the midnight sun where dwelt the Eskimo. One night, although the sun was visible in the heavens and the light quite

strong they came upon a village of Eskimo, all wrapped in profound slumber. Then for the first time Hearne learned the reason for all the recent caution and stealth which his companions had been practicing. Matonabee's indians burst upon this village like a swarm of demons. After the massacre, the indians plundered the village, and on the next day the party reached the Arctic. It was now July.

Hearne has the honor of being the first white man to reach the Arctic by the overland route, but the joy of the event was clouded by the memory of the massacre of the day before, which he had been unable to prevent. Matonabee had been deaf to all his pleadings and had refused to stay the hands of his savage followers and Hearne, horrified and sick at heart had turned from the scene sobbing like a child. Matonabee, like his warriors, was overjoyed with the loot secured.

Perhaps the indians feared the vengeance of the Eskimo for they retreated rapidly southward to the Athabasca region, where they spent the ensuing winter. Hearne did not get back to Fort Prince of Wales until in June, 1772. Within a year the savage old governor, Norton, was dead, and Hearne succeeded him to the command of the fort. In contrast to the stormy, cruel and licentious rule of Norton was the ten years of peace and justice while Hearne had charge of the place; then one morning in August, 1782, three ships flying the colors of France drew up before the place, landed troops and prepared to storm the fort. Hearne saw the folly of resistance and surrendered to the French commander La Pérouse. Again, and for the last time, did France triumph on Hudson's Bay, and again her lawmakers gave back to England what the valor of her

soldiers had won. Peace saw the red banner of the company back upon the walls of the fort. It has floated there unmolested by foreign foe ever since.

Chapter III
The Northwest Fur Company

The Northwest Fur Company

After the temporary excitement of La Pérouse's invasion had subsided, the ancient and honorable Hudson's Bay Company again folded its arms and settled down for another nap. Staunchly supported by the British government and tolerably free from rivals, there seemed to be no reason why the traders should waste energy and money in reaching out into the interior when the indian, if you only waited, would be sure to bring his furs to the posts beside the bay. Reasoning thus, no efforts were made after Hearne's several expeditions to further extend geographical knowledge by those in charge of the affairs of the great company.

So far, few great names had been connected with the history of the company, and its history as a whole is uninteresting enough for a long period of years. True such notables as Prince Rupert, the Duke of York and the Duke of Marlborough had occupied the position of governor of the company, but they had remained in England, and their fame was won on the battlefields and in the courts of Europe, and not as fur-traders in the wilderness of America.

In the fur country both resident governor and subordinate trader lived easy, slothful lives, piling up fortunes and ruling like monarchs over the barren wastes of snow and ice which comprised their realm, but they

did precious little to advance English interests or geographical knowledge. In the beginning the two French adventurers in their employ, Radisson and Groseilliers, had shown much energy, but their exploits, together with the travels of Hearne in the Arctic regions, constituted about all that was done along the line of exploring or pathfinding. From time to time the Hudson's Bay men were roused up for a brief spell by the activity of rivals; Iberville raid, the Vérendrye operations in the west and La Pérouse's campaign each gave them a temporary stirring up, but now they were to be awakened in earnest.

Scotch and English traders not in the employ of the great company held a meeting and organized a rival company. As Canada was full of French voyageurs, whom the English conquest and the failure of French trading companies had thrown out of employment, the new company made friends of these hardy woodsmen and took many of them into their employ. These reckless, freedom-loving woods-rangers had never taken kindly to the bluff, exacting and reserved manner of the English factors, they remembered the indulgence and familiarity of their old French commanders in the days gone by, and as this new company seemed to offer the better chance they turned to it eagerly. Thus was born the famous Northwest Company.

The new firm soon consisted of twenty-three shareholders, or partners, and employed no fewer than two thousand persons or clerks, guides, interpreters, voyageurs, etc. Their trading posts sprang up like mushrooms all along the interior lakes and rivers, with Montreal as the storehouse. From Montreal all supplies and trade goods were conveyed to the interior posts by

means of batteaux and canoes. The revenue of the Hudson's Bay Company from the tribes of the far west was quickly shut off.

The Northwest Company was very particular as to whom they admitted into partnership, and that coveted position could be obtained only by a long and faithful service. This system brought forth the most efficient and most loyal men, and proved a powerful factor in the prosecution of the business.

Great names are associated with this famous trading company, among which the McTavishes, McGillivroys, McKenzies, Frobrishers, Henrys and Thompson are most prominent. Every year a great concourse of partners, traders and voyageurs was held at Fort William at the grand portage on Lake Superior, and to this rendezvous partners from Montreal proceeded in canoes by way of the Saint Lawrence, Ottawa and portages to Lake Huron, then onward through the straits and across the great expanse of Lake Superior. They traveled with all the pomp and fanfare of an eastern potentate or a feudal lord. The indians and the poor white trappers must have looked upon these gorgeously attired and equipped worthies with something akin to awe.

Fort William was the scene of much revelry and rejoicing at this time. Old acquaintances were renewed and new ones made, while friendships were pledged and repledged over the flowing bowl. There was drinking and feasting and dancing and love making galore. The table groaned under delicacies brought up from Montreal, then there was a plentiful supply of wilderness food, fish from the lakes, venison, buffalo, buffalo tongues, beaver tails and so forth, in unlimited quan-

tities. Scotchman, Englishman, Frenchman, indian and half breed were there, decked out in all their finery. Partners from Montreal arrayed in the very best that could be purchased in Montreal, or Canada, elbowed about among paint-bedaubed savages from the most remote regions. It was a great social occasion, but not all the time was spent in revelry; council meetings were held in solemn state and with order and dignity; there was much solemn deliberation and hard reasoning, and every detail of the coming year's campaign was looked into carefully and thoroughly.

The policy of the nor'westers, as they were called, of going direct to the savages for their furs, instead of waiting for the latter to come to them, led to extensive exploring enterprises, and led to a most thorough knowledge of the country, a knowledge, however, which they carefully guarded and kept to themselves for many years. The names of David Thompson, Alexander Henry, the younger, Simon Frazer, Hugh Monroe and Alexander Mackenzie have become famous for their thorough exploration of the northwest and north.

David Thompson was an educated Englishman who had come to America and entered into the employe of the Hudson's Bay Company. He was a skilled astronomer and mathematician, and his services were soon required in the Athabasca region, but following out its custom the old company carried on this work no farther than was required by present needs, and Thompson's work was soon stopped. Visiting a meeting of nor'westers at Fort William he made known his qualifications, and was appointed to the position of astronomer and surveyor of the corporation. He made many valuable observations along the south shore of Lake Superior, along the upper Mississippi and Lake Winnipeg. He

also pushed up the Saskatchewan as far as Lake Winnipegosis, thence up Swan river, and subsequently to the Assiniboine. In later years Thompson made a number of valuable explorations in the Rockies, and although the Americans had already explored the lower reaches of the Columbia he was the first man to explore the upper river, and in 1807 built Kootenai house, the first fur-trading post in the region.

Alexander Henry, was called the "younger" to distinguish him from that other Alexander Henry, a fur-trader of an earlier day and likewise celebrated as a trail-breaker. The chief interest attached to the younger Henry lies in his wonderful journal, which for the period of 1799 to 1814, contains what is perhaps the best account of the fur-trade and the daily life of the trader ever written. Henry was truthful, even brutally frank, in recording the evils arising from the liquor trade, the swindling devices used in trading with the ignorant savages, and the drunken orgies indulged in by both indians and traders. He frankly relates his own part in these doings, making no effort to excuse or varnish over matters. This adds to the value of the journal.

Henry's travels extended over much territory which is now known as Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Keewatin and British Columbia. His first expedition into the west after furs netted him a profit of seven hundred pounds and the next year (1800) found him back in the country with a large stock of trade goods, among the items being ninety gallons of rum. He established a post on the Red river of the north and carried on a brisk trade, which amounted to nearly two thousand pounds Halifax currency.

Henry remarks upon the use of horses among the

indians of the northwest along about 1803, and deploras their appearance in the country as tending to make his own employees more independent and less industrious. Curiously enough he also preaches long sermons on intemperance and the evil effects of liquor upon the indians, yet he seems not to have ever practiced the virtues of which he preached.

The liquor trade with the drunkenness, degredation, fighting and even murder which followed in its wake, was long a crying evil of the fur business and a source of constant irritation to the authorities. As far back as 1663 in the days of the French régime we find the Jesuit, Father Carheil, complaining of the ruinous results of the brandy trade upon the mission indians at Michillimackinac and other stations, and he says that the soldiers have turned their fort into a place which he is "ashamed to call by its right name," where liberally supplied with liquor and indian girls, both officers and men vie with each other in wild excesses. He criticises the traders and *coureurs de bois* equally as severely as he does the soldiers.

We can well imagine what a dangerous animal the drunken indian armed with deadly weapons could, and did, become. Henry's journal frequently records murders committed during drinking bouts, and how sometimes the whole camp, even including women and children, were dead drunk. Knowing as we do the demoralizing effects liquor has among civilized people we shudder to contemplate what its effects must have been upon poor, simple-minded savages. Efforts had been made from time to time by the French authorities under the old régime to prohibit or at least limit the traffic, but there always arose the argument that "the indian demands the brandy and will have it at any cost.

Down in New York the Dutch and English traders are willing and anxious to let him have it. If we don't furnish him these rival traders will, and they will also get his furs." This argument always proved effective. Henry says that officers of the Northwest and the Hudson's Bay companies made efforts to abolish the evils of the traffic but without success. If an indian possessed a beaver skin he was always sure of being able to get a drink of liquor for it, even if the liquor was considerably diluted with water.

During the war between the Americans and the British and their indian allies in 1812-1815, Henry went with a company of nor'westers to capture Astor's trading post on the Columbia. A season of disgraceful debauchery followed the English occupation; one of the last entries in Henry's diary says that "the gentlemen and the crew (were) all drunk." Following one of these sprees Henry and six others were capsized with their boat in the Columbia and all drowned.

Hugh Monroe, "Rising Wolf" as the Blackfeet called him, was another famous trader and traveler of those days, while Simon Fraser explored the great river now named for him and floating on down to the Pacific, an accomplishment in which he was only preceded by his compatriot, Alexander Mackenzie, and the Americans, Lewis and Clark. We will tell of Alexander Mackenzie and the first crossing of the continent in our next chapter.

By their energy and perseverance the nor'westers had become famous as explorers, and dangerous as trade rivals to the Hudson's Bay Company. Bitter rivalry and even open warfare was to ensue ere the two rivals were to come together by compromise and union, which they eventually did in 1821.

Chapter XII
The First Crossing of the Continent

The First Crossing of the Continent

Perhaps the greatest of all the northwestern explorers, Alexander Mackenzie, ranks head and shoulders above them all. Born in Scotland in 1755, he came to Canada at an early age and entered the fur-trade, and served for some time in the counting house at Montreal. His first trading excursion was to Michigan, and we next hear of him in the wilderness to the west of the Great Lakes, where he acquitted himself so satisfactorily that the partners sent him to the Athabasca country, six weeks' travel from the nearest post. When he emerged from this sub-arctic exile he had made himself famous as an explorer.

Buried away from civilization, amid the snowy forests and icy lakes and rivers of the Athabasca country, lay Fort Chippewau. Its trapper and trader occupants had no communication with the outside world for sometimes as much as two years at a stretch. It was a place that required strong men and hardy, men, not afraid to do and to dare. Mackenzie had all these qualities, and in addition he had ambition. To the northward of him he had seen a mighty river rolling its flood of waters toward the Arctic. Other men had followed the phantom of a northwest water-route to Asia. Now Mackenzie, too, caught the fever. Might not this river lead to the long sought waterway? He would see for himself, and perhaps also win the £20,000 which the

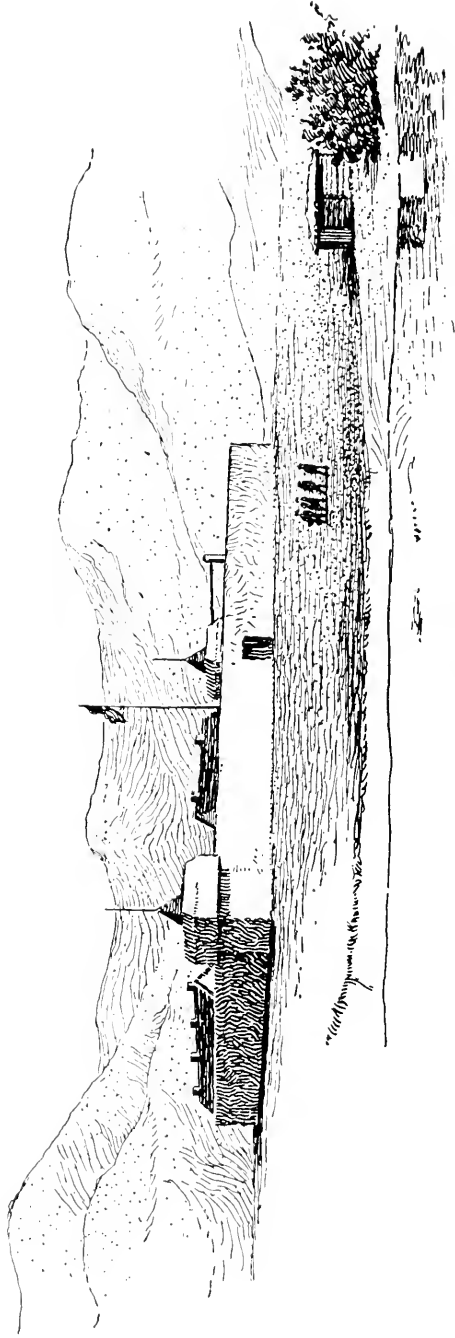
British government had offered for its discovery. The love of adventure and the prospect of wealth and fame all appealed to the hardy Scot with a force which he could not resist.

In June, 1789, when the season's trading was over, the furs sorted and shipped in flotillas of keel boats down to Fort William on Lake Superior where the company maintained a warehouse, Mackenzie turned the command of his post over to a subordinate and embarked with four voyageurs, their wives and a German, in a large birch-bark canoe, and paddled toward the unknown. With them in other canoes went a number of indian hunters and interpreters, as well as one of the clerks, LeRoux, who had charge of the trade goods, for even on an exploring expedition an eye was kept ever open for trade.

Nothing of interest occurred until they reached Slave lake. Here they were held up by the ice. They went into camp and spent the time of their enforced delay in fishing, gathering berries, and, as wild fowl were nesting, they collected dozens of their eggs. The clerk, LeRoux, also secured eight packs of beaver and marten skins from the indians met at the place.

With the breaking up of the ice Mackenzie moved out of the lake and into the river, making good progress down stream. So far all had gone well, but Mackenzie's indians now began to give trouble. The indians they met painted a most dismal picture of the dangers beyond, and the whites had much difficulty in preventing the superstitious guides from deserting. Game was plentiful and the travelers fared sumptuously. But for the fears of the indians it would have been a pleasant journey.

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FORT PIERRE

From an original drawing made by Alexander H. Murray in 1844

All along the river they found indian villages and encampments, and at each Mackenzie and his men were regaled with stories of rapids and falls and river monsters ahead which terrified the indians all the more, and it was with difficulty that the white men could prevail upon their allies to proceed further. Game was no longer plentiful, and Mackenzie to quiet his men had to promise he would turn back if the sea was not reached in seven days.

One night the men arose at twelve o'clock to embark, thinking it was morning. Mackenzie rejoiced to think that he must now be very near the sea, now that he was in the land of the midnight sun. Next day an Eskimo hut was discovered, and at this the men were eager to go on. Coming to a large lake they encamped upon a small island. Climbing the highest point on this island Mackenzie was surprised to see before him a sea of ice. That night rising waters compelled them to move their baggage, and when this occurred regularly for a few nights they awoke to the fact that this sea of ice was nothing less than the Arctic, the frozen ocean of the north, but not the long sought for water route to the Orient.

The homeward journey against the current of the river was far more laborious than the down trip had been. Men had to go ashore with ropes to pull the boats against the strong current, and this work was wearisome and unpleasant in the extreme. By September they were back again at Fort Chippewau, after an absence of one hundred and two days.

Having followed the great river now named for him to its emptying place in the Arctic, Mackenzie began laying plans for the ascent of another river—the

Peace – which came rolling down from the western mountains. He wanted to follow this river to its source, then cross over the mountains and find the Pacific. Vérendrye had tried to push overland to the western ocean years before but had been halted by the Rockies. Mackenzie resolved to conquer this mountain barrier if possible.

Spanish, English and Russian traders and explorers had coasted the American shore of the Pacific and these voyages had been the subject of much comment in England and America, but Mackenzie's trip to the Arctic was scarcely noticed, but undaunted and undiscouraged he asked and obtained leave to attempt the linking up of his Canadian explorations with those of Cook and others on the Pacific. Before starting out he spent the winter in England studying surveying and astronomy.

October 10, 1792, Mackenzie set out on his western journey. October 19, he was at what was known as Old Establishment, an old trading post which had been occupied by a party the night before and by them carelessly set on fire. But for the timely arrival of the explorers the fort would have burned down. Next day they reached the encampment which had been prepared by a party which Mackenzie had sent in advance for the purpose. Here they wintered, and when spring came they sent the furs they had collected back to Fort Chipewau, while Mackenzie, his clerk, Alexander Mackay, six Canadian voyageurs and two indian hunters, stepped into their birch canoes and pushed on up the river; the date of their starting being May 9, 1793.

The party thoroughly enjoyed the balmy spring weather and the beautiful scenery as they progressed

onward, in spite of the fact that the river was swift and progress against it laborious and slow. Rapids were finally reached, and the voyageurs expressed their belief that they could proceed no further, but Mackenzie would not even consider the possibility of a retreat. He overcame some of the rapids by drawing the boats over them by means of ropes; others he portaged around, but always he got forward in some way or other.

On June 9, the party encountered some indians who brandished weapons and otherwise threatened them. Mackenzie stepped boldly ashore, and after making them a few presents succeeded in mollifying them to the extent that they changed their warlike attitude for one of peace at once. These indians told the travelers that they were near the continental divide, and hurrying forward Mackenzie was gratified to learn that this was true.

From the head of Peace river there was a short portage over the divide to the head of another stream which led off in a southerly direction; this stream was the beginning of the Frazer, and down it Mackenzie and party proceeded amid rocks and foaming rapids until his boats came to grief. No lives were lost but much of the ammunition was in the wreck of their canoes, and it was decided that another route, could one be found, would be more feasible.

More indians were met who at first made a show of hostility, but were won over by presents. These indians informed Mackenzie that the river he was on emptied into the "stinking lake" (Pacific Ocean), but that its mouth was many, many miles away, and that the way was beset by many dangerous rapids, but that if he wished to go to the ocean he could soon reach it by

marching overland through the mountains. Mackenzie resolved to make the trial, and so he set out through the gloomy forests and the jumble of rock-ribbed, chasm-seamed, cloud-capped mountains toward the setting sun. The going was extremely rough, but the men seemed to have imbibed some of the courage of their leader and followed him cheerfully. Finally the last mountain rampart was surmounted, and on July 20, the Pacific was reached.

The sight of the great foam-capped surges rolling in upon the land, with troops of seals tumbling about on the slippery, wave-drenched rocks, and flocks of gulls and other water birds skimming about the surface in quest of food, was a most welcome one to our heroes. The prize which Vérendrye and others had vainly sought had been won by an unknown fur-trader, from an unknown post in an unknown land. Away back yonder in 1513, the Spaniard, Balboa, had crossed the narrow Isthmus of Panama and :

“Stared at the Pacific – and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise –
Silent upon a peak in Darien.”

The knightly old sea pirate, Sir Francis Drake, had repeated the exploit of Balboa, but all this had taken place far, far to the southward, and no one had crossed the main continent until Mackenzie's successful dash in 1793. On the face of a great rock he painted in large letters :

“Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada, by land, the twenty-second of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety three.”

The return journey was full of accident and peril,

but the men were headed toward home, and this made all the difference in the world. Indians were at times hostile, but peace was always secured without the need of shedding blood. The little fort on the Peace river was reached August 4. With flags flying and songs and cheers awakening echoes among the forests and mountains, the voyageurs swept down upon the fort, and joyful indeed was the meeting with friends there.

Life at such isolated places as Fort Chippewau was lonely and monotonous in the extreme. Especially did it seem tame and dreary to Mackenzie after his wild experiences amid the Rockies and in the ice fields of the Arctic. We find him complaining bitterly of the hard lot in his journals. He soon went back to the old world, never again to see the wide spreading plains, the magnificent forests or the lofty, snow-crowned peaks of the land where he had won both fame and fortune. In 1801 he published his book, *Voyages from Montreal on the River Saint Lawrence, through the Continent of North America, to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans, in the years 1789 and 1793*. In 1802 Mackenzie was knighted. He died in his native Scotland March 12, 1820.

Chapter XIII
Trade and Exploration on the
Pacific Coast

Trade and Exploration on the Pacific Coast

While various companies were struggling for control of the fur-trade of Canada and the great interior valleys of the continent, pushing their enterprises to the very foot of the Rockies, other adventurers equally as daring and hardy were beating up and down the long coasts of the Pacific, with the object of acquiring the wealth of those regions. The first of these sea rovers to visit our western coasts were the Spaniards from Mexico and wild Russian bandits from Siberia, brave but unskilled in navigation, recklessly risking their lives in crazy makeshift vessels which foundered and sank whenever overtaken by anything resembling a heavy sea.

Russian fur-traders had gradually worked eastward over Siberia toward the Pacific, just as Frenchman, Englishman, Spaniard and American trappers and traders had moved westward, fleeing from the civilization of the Atlantic seaboard, but the Russians were a wilder, rougher crowd than were the traders of the other nationalities. On pretense of collecting the one-tenth tribute due the czar, cossack soldiery robbed and pillaged indiscriminately.

When at last the Pacific was reached the Russians launched their clumsy, hastily-built and ill-manned

craft and braved the seas in pursuit of the sea otter, whose skin was greatly in demand at that time. Glimpses were occasionally obtained through the fogs and mists which shrouded the northern seas, of long, dark masses to the eastward, which they took to be land.

Finally, in 1741, the czar sent Vitus Bering, a Danish sailor in Russian pay, to learn whether or not there was land so near to the northern coasts of Asia. Bering settled the question in the affirmative, but left his bones in the land he discovered.

Lawless traders followed in Bering's wake. Forts and trading posts were erected at various points, and ere long seventy-seven private concerns were in the fur business in Alaska, the trail of the traders being everywhere marked by the most cruel and atrocious treatment of the natives imaginable. Finally one of these traders succeeded in bringing a number of these reckless free traders into a sort of union, and out of this arrangement grew the future Russian-American Company.

The sea otter was to Russian traders what the beaver was to the French and English traders of Canada. Fortunes were made in single voyages, but the slaughter of the animals was so ruthless that the supply was soon greatly diminished. Today strenuous efforts are being made to save the remnant that survives from total extermination.

English and American traders soon heard of the golden harvest awaiting them in the trade of those fur coasts, and ere long ships of those adventurous nations were thick upon the western coast of the continent, competing with the Russians for the trade.

The first Englishman to visit those northwest shores of America was the famous navigator, Captain Cook,

who, after discovering Nootka Inlet, explored the coast for some distance before he turned westward over the vast expanse of the Pacific where he discovered the Hawaiian islands, where later he was to lose his life in a skirmish with natives.

A countryman of Cook's, Captain Meares, has the distinction of building the first ship on the northwest coast of America. By 1792, there were twenty-one vessels under various flags trading along the western coasts, the majority being American traders from Boston. All up and down the long, lonely coast went these stout little ships with their adventurous crews, trafficking with the indians until they had secured a valuable cargo of fur, when they would sail over to the great fur market at Canton. Here they would sell their peltries, reload their vessels and then start back on the long voyage to Boston.

Of these adventurous merchants none are so well known to us today as Robert Gray, and even his exploits have been pretty generally overlooked.

Gray was a Rhode Islander by birth and had served in the Revolutionary navy. In 1787, a party of Boston merchants decided to send him to the Pacific in charge of the sloop, *Lady Washington*. At the same time they resolved to send another vessel, a full rigged two-decker, the *Columbia*, in charge of Captain John Kendrick. Gray was the abler seaman of the two, although of course the merchants did not know this at the time.

The success of Cook's sailors in trading with the natives fired the Boston men to seek to emulate their doings and secure for America a share of the fur harvest. The two ships set forth with the brightest of anticipations. The two commanders had orders to proceed to the

western coast of North America by the long way around the Horn, where, after collecting a cargo of furs, they were to sail over to China, exchange their furs for tea and then return to Boston. The holds of the vessels were crammed with knives, kettles, blankets, tobacco and articles of finery calculated to catch the eye of the savages.

Slow progress was made by the vessels in their voyage around the Horn; furious gales pitched and tossed the ships about like cockle shells, scurvy raged on board the Columbia and Kendrick put in to Juan Fernandez because of it, while Gray battled on to the more pleasant regions farther to the north.

He first struck the American coast in the region of Mendocino and later thought he discovered the mouth of a large river, but as he was desperately in need of fresh water he forbade to examine his supposed find. Water being obtained somewhere at Fillamook bay, though not without having a sharp fight with hostile natives, Gray finally came to safe anchorage at Nootka. Here he met Captain Meares, and was surprised to see the extensive nature of the trading establishment. Two ships lay at anchor before a cannon-defended fort and a third vessel, a schooner of thirty tons, called the Northwest American, had just been built and was ready for launching. This was the first vessel other than an indian canoe or an Eskimo kiack to be launched on our western coasts.

Friendly relations were maintained between Gray and Meares, but the latter sought to frighten the Americans with tales of poor profits, indian hostility, and the like, all of which of course had not the slightest effect upon the Yankee tars. Kendrick now came up with the

Columbia and a sick crew. There was much feasting and rejoicing at the reunion with their comrades. The English vessels soon sailed for the Hawaiian islands, and while they were absent the Americans did a thriving business with the indians.

In April, 1789, Gray penetrated far up the straits of Fuca, which Juan de Fuca had discovered as far back as 1592, but which Cook had declared did not exist. When Gray got back to Nootka again he found a Spanish expedition under Martinez had arrived to oust Meares from his fort and take possession for Spain.

Gray and Kendrick now exchanged vessels, the former in the larger ship sailing for China, taking with him the crew of the captured Northwest American. Exchanging his cargo of furs for one of tea, Gray sailed for Boston by way of Cape of Good Hope. Gray and the Columbia was the first American captain and the first American ship to circumnavigate the globe.

Gray arrived in Boston in August, 1790. In September of the same year he again sailed for the Pacific coast, which he reached without mishap. At Fort Defiance, some distance south of Nootka, he established himself, gave the Columbia a good overhauling and made her seaworthy again. Here too he built a small vessel, the Adventure, which was the second vessel constructed upon the Pacific coast.

Kendrick sailed for China in the Lady Washington, the Adventure headed north to trade in furs, while Gray turned the Columbia's prow southward to search for that river whose mouth he had seen on the former voyage and which the Spaniard, Hecla, had also observed in 1775. A sick crew had prevented Hecla from examining it, and lack of water had kept Gray from

making any effort in that direction on his former trip, but this time he entered the river and sailed up it some twenty or thirty miles until he was sure that it really was a river. Naming the great waterway the Columbia, after his vessel, Gray took possession of it in the name of the United States of America. His was a most valuable discovery, and one upon which American claims to the region were later based, but his countrymen paid little enough attention to the man or his discovery at the time.

In the spring of 1791, Captain George Vancouver was sent to the Pacific coast with two vessels to receive back from Spain the fort at Nootka and all other English property seized by the Spaniards in those regions. He was also instructed to thoroughly explore all the coast lying between New Spain and Russian America, and particularly was he to seek that mysterious, and as it proved mythical waterway between the Atlantic and Pacific of which explorers, geographers and statesmen had been dreaming through the centuries. Bering, Cook and others had disproved the existence of this waterway, but it had been dreamed of and talked about for so long that men would not be convinced, and now Vancouver was to settle the question once and for all. Vancouver was off the mouth of the Columbia two weeks before Gray but did not deem it worth while to investigate, and so missed his chance.

At Nootka the English and Spanish sailors met in a most friendly manner, and with a great show of pomp and circumstance the representative of Spain transferred the sovereignty of the region over to the English. Vancouver made many valuable discoveries in the region and settled forever the question of the northwest

passage. He also found that the land on which Nootka was situated was a very large island. This island now bears the name of the bold navigator.

Meeting up with Captain Gray, Vancouver was both vexed and disappointed to learn that the American had found the Columbia after he himself had thrown away the chance of discovery. Steering at once for the mouth of the river he learned that Gray had told him the truth. One of his officers, Lieutenant Broughton, examined the river for miles, and with a cheerful disregard for what Gray had done, he landed and proclaimed the country British territory.

While English, Spanish and American traders were thus engaged in exploring the coast, building forts and setting up claims for their respective governments, the Russians were not idle, but they were a lawless set and spent quite as much energy in fighting private enemies as they did in extending Russian authority. In 1790, however, there sailed for America a man, who was fully able to protect all Russia's rights. This man was Alexander Baranoff, a hard drinking, unscrupulous despot, but a master mind in the fur business as well.

Baranoff's bravery, good judgment and business ability rapidly brought him forward as the foremost figure in all Russia America. Following the example of Gregory Shelikoff, who had made the first steps in the direction of uniting the various trading companies years before, Baranoff consolidated the various companies, cultivated friendly relations with the hitherto badly abused natives, encouraged American traders to trade at his establishments, scattered his sea otter hunters all down the coast as far as California, and in other ways strengthened his hold on the country and the people.

Although a strict disciplinarian with his men, he himself indulged in the wildest of dissipation with guests at headquarters, and at such times was tyrannical beyond all reason. From his headquarters at Sitka he ruled all Alaska with an iron hand, and the Czar never had a more efficient or loyal representative in the country, but enemies were busy and caused his recall from office in 1818. He took his disgrace so sorely to heart that he died broken-hearted on the journey homeward.

With an opportunity for boundless graft, so dear to Russian officialdom, Baranoff's books were found in faultless condition, and the grizzled old trader, who had every chance to amass a fortune, died a poor man.

Chapter XIV

American Independence - Trans-mississippi Explorations

American Independence - Trans-mississippi Explorations

When at the peace of 1763, France surrendered Canada to England, along with all the rest of her possessions east of the Mississippi, she also turned over to Spain all her vast territory reaching from the great river westward to the distant Rockies, and the white banner of the Bourbons disappeared forever from the North American mainland. It was a sorrowful day for the French populations of the Saint Lawrence valley, the Great Lake regions and the scattered settlements along the Illinois, the Mississippi and the Missouri, when they beheld the flags of their hated rivals flung to the breeze. The savages, too, did not look kindly upon the change. They liked the French but they hated the overbearing English army officers, who came to take charge of the surrendered posts. The Pontiac war with its bloody succession of murders and massacres followed.

Scarcely had the Pontiac war been brought to a close when the first rumblings of the coming storm of the Revolution began to be heard along the Atlantic seaboard. French officials in Paris chuckled to themselves when the colonies arose against English rule and later on substantial aid was given the Americans in the struggle for independence, in vain hopes, perhaps, of again

winning back Canada and the Mississippi valley for France. America secured her freedom, but English victories at sea shattered French dreams of reconquest, and peace found her still excluded from the continent.

The French revolution and its aftermath, the Napoleonic wars, revived French dreams of dominion in America. Napoleon forced Spain to restore Louisiana to France, but he was compelled to part with the colony almost immediately to prevent it from falling into English hands. America was seeking to acquire the port of New Orleans in order to secure an outlet for the produce of her western settlements. Napoleon offered to sell her not only New Orleans but the whole of Louisiana. Jefferson and his advisors were almost staggered by the offer, but, to their everlasting credit, they closed the bargain with the emperor at once. Again there was a change of flags in Louisiana, this time for good.

What was comprised within the limits of what was then known as Louisiana, few Americans besides Jefferson knew or cared to know. Fur-traders had wandered far and wide over the limitless plains and one of them, Vérendrye, had even reached the Rockies. Little trading posts were scattered here and there along the courses of the great rivers and their tributaries, while far to the northward, on British territory, the enterprising and adventurous trader, Alexander Mackenzie, had succeeded in reaching the Pacific, but as yet no one had accomplished this much on American territory.

Carver, the Englishman, and later Michaux, the Frenchman, had planned a systematic exploration of the western country, but the plans of both fell through. Jefferson revived the scheme and chose two army captains, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, to con-

duct operations. A better choice of men would have been hard to make, both were of good old Virginia stock, and both were peculiarly fitted for the work at hand. Jefferson's plans were for the party to ascend the Missouri, cross over the continental divide to Pacific waters, making a thorough study of the country and its possibilities as they went. The captains were given a force consisting of forty-five efficient men, well equipped for the struggle with the wilderness. For the transportation of their supplies they were furnished with three boats: one a keel-boat fifty-five feet long, drawing three feet of water and fitted with twenty-two oars and a sail; the other two were pirogues, one of six and the other of seven oars. Two horses were led along the bank for the use of the hunters in pursuing and bringing in game.

The start was made May 14, 1804, and slow progress was made against the strong, turbid current of the Missouri. The progress was made still slower by the fact that they landed at every indian village to hold council and cultivate friendships with all the tribes, this being a part of their instructions. The scene of one of these meetings has been perpetuated in the name Council Bluffs, by the city now occupying the site. On August 11, Sergeant Charles Floyd died and was buried on the banks of the great river, being the only serious misfortune attending the progress of the expedition up the Missouri.

From time to time they passed small trading establishments of Frenchmen, and once they met two French traders who had been robbed by indians of the up country and were now retracing their weary way back to the settlements. In the Mandan villages they met a Mr.

McCracken of the Northwest Fur Company. Other trappers and traders were met from time to time.

At the Mandan villages Lewis and Clark proposed to go into winter quarters. They at once set about erecting a fort and laying in a supply of buffalo meat. The winter was a severe one, but the men feasted royally, and just as soon as the weather moderated sufficiently they were again on the move up the river.

A party had been sent back to Saint Louis from the Mandan village to carry specimens of animal and vegetable life to the authorities there, who in turn were to forward same to Washington. With the rest of the party the captains pushed forward to the mouth of the Yellowstone, near which they killed their first grizzly bear. Reaching the rough, broken country at the foot of the mountains they were obliged to "cordell" their boats, a number of the men walking along the banks of the river pulling on a tow line, while those on board fended the boats off rocks and away from the banks with poles.

At the mouth of the Marias the travelers were much puzzled which stream was the main one. With four men Lewis started out to investigate. Taking the stream to their left they soon came to Great Falls, and decided that they had chosen rightly and were on the main river. Soon after, they were obliged to abandon their boat, as only the canoes could be navigated further. On July 15, they passed through the cañon known as the gate of the mountains, and the three forks of the Missouri were soon reached. They named these three branches of the great river Jefferson, Madison and Gallatin, in honor of the president, the secretary of state and the secretary of the treasury.

Choosing the Jefferson fork the explorers pushed forward laboriously, the stream becoming more and more shallow as they advanced, compelling the men to pull and haul and push almost constantly in order to get the canoes along at all.

Sacajawea, (the bird woman), the indian wife of the interpreter, as a child had lived in the region they were now traversing, but had been stolen from her people by another tribe and carried away into captivity. She had never returned to her native country, but on her mind the topography of the region had been indelibly impressed. She now came forward as guide, and proved an invaluable assistant.

Abandoning the river at last the travelers took the old indian trail by way of Lemhi pass to a tributary of the Columbia. This portion of their journey was extremely difficult and vexatious; game became scarce, the great herds of buffalo had been left behind, and hunger was only kept away by slaughtering and eating horses and dogs, which they purchased from the indians.

As soon as possible they again took to the water, procuring some wooden dugouts from the natives and floating in them down to the Pacific, which they reached on November 7. On the coast they saw much evidence of former visits by white men, one woman being observed who had the name J. Bowman tattooed upon her arm, the artist no doubt being some English or American trader who had visited the locality.

All the way up the Missouri, Lewis and Clark had met wandering traders and trappers, and now, too, on the western coasts among wigwams of the indians evidence of former visits by this adventurous gentry were

found, another proof that the fur-trade produced the first real pathfinders.

All this does not detract from the fame of Lewis's and Clark's achievements; they are entitled to all the glory and praise that has been accorded them, but how about those nameless wanderers who, on their own incentive, with no thought of glory and with no government backing, penetrated these wilds and in most cases paved the way for the future explorer. Is he not entitled to an equal share of the credit?

Erecting a rude fort, which they named Clatsop, after an indian tribe of the region, the explorers passed the winter of 1805-1806. The return journey was begun March 23, and was attended by quite as important investigations as was the westward march. Excursions were made to each side of the main route, the Marias and the Yellowstone both receiving attention.

One of the men, John Colter, was so fascinated with life in the wilds that he obtained permission to leave the command and attach himself to a party of trappers which they met coming up the Missouri.

The final stages of the journey were made with rapidity, and Saint Louis was reached on September 23, 1806, where the explorers were again reunited with relatives and friends after their long sojourn in the wilds of the far west.

With the exception of Lewis and Clark and Pike, none of the first American explorers were scientific men, being for the most part rude, sometimes unlettered, trappers and traders. No notice was taken of their travels. Those who kept journals or, like Colter, Bridger or Beckwourth, brought in tales of important discoveries, were met with incredulity, and not infrequently brand-

ed as impudent liars. That some of them were noted for their ability to twist the truth out of all proportion cannot be denied. Bridger and Beckwourth were both considered proficient in the art of prevarication, yet this does not change facts.

Rival traders began operations along the Missouri, and as the old monopolies of the French and Spaniard no longer held good, the wealth of the fur country was for him who could capture and hold the trade. Two rivals came into especial notice, one party headed by the Chouteau brothers and the other by the Spaniard, Manuel Lisa. As Lewis and Clark were the first to make a systematic exploration of the upper Missouri and its tributaries, so Lisa was the first to systematize the fur-trade in those regions. The wandering French traders who had visited the up country had gone among the indians for their furs, and had had no especial place of rendezvous or no fixed method of trading, excepting on the lower reaches of the river. Lisa's plan was to establish trading posts at suitable places clear to the Rockies.

In 1807, he ascended the Missouri and the Yellowstone to the mouth of the Big Horn, where he built a fort and spent the ensuing winter. From this point he sent out emissaries to all the surrounding tribes in an endeavor to establish trade and peaceful relations with them. It was while on one of these missions to the Crows in behalf of Lisa that Colter discovered the wonderful geyser regions of the Yellowstone, but his report was received with incredulity, and the region he described came to be derisively known as "Colter's Hell" in consequence. Chouteau also sent an expedition up the Missouri in 1807, but this party was turned back by the Arikara and compelled to retrace their steps.

Lisa and the Chouteaus now joined forces and organized the Missouri Fur Company. Forts were built along the Gros Ventres and at the three forks of the Missouri, in the very heart of the Blackfoot country. The Blackfeet had given Lewis and Clark some trouble during their return journey, and Lewis had been compelled to kill one of their number. This act of Lewis's kindled in the tribe a deadly enmity against the whites, and now when Lisa came and began building a fort, and apparently with the intention of taking possession of the country, their anger was kindled anew, and they began so deadly a warfare that Lisa was compelled to abandon the fort.

In spite of this hostility, however, a company of Missouri men, under Andrew Henry, crossed over the continental divide and built a fort, the first American trading post on the Pacific side of the Rockies.

Chapter XV
Explorations in the Southwest

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Explorations in the Southwest

While Lewis and Clark and Lisa and the Chouteaus were exploring the upper Missouri and the regions of the Rockies and of the far Columbia, other adventurous soldiers and traders were equally busy, but with eyes turned toward Mexico and the southwest. Years before the American occupation of Louisiana, Spanish troops had extended their journeyings as far to the northward and eastward as the plains of Kansas, searching for the fabled golden city of Quivira. Frenchmen from the settlements along the Mississippi had also penetrated far into the country for furs and for the purpose of establishing a trade route to Mexico, one party headed by the Mallet brothers had even succeeded in pushing on to Santa Fé in 1739, but nothing had come of their journey. The Spaniards feared, and with good reason, to establish communications with either the French or their American successors.

The first American to attempt to trade in that uncertain and unfriendly region was a merchant of Kaskaskia, named Morrison. In 1804, he sent a French creole, LaLande, to Santa Fé to attempt the establishment of trade relations. LaLande fell in love with the quaint old town, its easy, careless life and its charming, dark-eyed *senoritas*, and resolved to stay there. Incidentally he forgot to make any returns to his employer

for the goods entrusted to him, and lived in comfort on the proceeds of his ill-gotten gains.

Another American, James Pursley, in 1805, also drifted into this mysterious and fascinating region and, like LaLande, he liked the place and settled down there to live. Other American adventurers came dropping in from time to time. Some were keen traders and made a good profit on their goods, returning to the States with a good sum of money; others fell into the hands of bandits and were robbed of all their effects; still others, scarcely more fortunate, were seized by Mexican officials, their goods confiscated and themselves thrown into prison.

From the very first Americans were interested in the Mexican territories to the southwestward and traders, filibusters and soldiers of fortune turned greedy eyes toward the region. Already were the borderers dreaming of "the day" when that land would come under the dominion of the stars and stripes.

In 1806, Captain Zebulon Pike, a meritorious officer of the regular army, was sent to investigate this southwestern country. He had just returned from a scientific expedition to the headwaters of the Mississippi, and had acquitted himself so well that he was chosen to lead the proposed expedition to the southwest. There has always been some question as to what the real objects of this expedition were. We know that the army chief, General Wilkinson, was hand and glove with Aaron Burr in a conspiracy against Spanish sovereignty in Mexico and possibly our own southwestern settlements as well, and it was thought that in all probability this excursion of Pike's was a part of the plot, but as subsequent investigations have utterly failed to connect Pike with any dishonorable alignment with the Burr con-

spiracy, his name comes down to us unsullied. If he ever did entertain any treasonable designs against the government, his heroic death while leading his troops against the British at York (Toronto) a few years later fully atones for it all.

Pike left Saint Louis July 15, 1806, with a force of twenty-three men – a ridiculously small force if he had any designs against the Mexicans – and went up the Missouri. He had with him a number of indians who had been redeemed from captivity among other tribes and which he wished to restore to their own people. He quickly accomplished this part of his business and, while he afterward occasionally had some slight trouble with the savages, the action of the Americans in restoring their friends and relatives gained for the government the gratitude of many of the tribes, while it wonderfully increased its prestige.

Just as Lewis and Clark had met with trappers and traders far in the wilderness regions, so also Pike found that white men had preceded him everywhere. Trappers were met from time to time, and in the Pawnee villages they found a well-beaten trail leading to the Mexican settlements, showing that Spanish soldiers had frequented the region. In one of the Pawnee villages Pike found the Spanish flag flying. This he promptly hauled down and replaced it with the American ensign.

Reaching the upper waters of the Arkansas, Pike dispatched a party of soldiers under Lieutenant Wilkinson (son of the commanding general) down that stream in skin canoes to report the progress of the expedition thus far, while with the main party he moved on up the river. On November 15, Pike discovered the dim outlines of the peak that perpetuates his fame.

Winter coming on apace, Pike and his men suffered

severely from the cold. A part of his orders were to find the Red river, and with this object in view he marched his men back and forth across the country in spite of cold and snow and nakedness and hunger. At length they came upon a large river which they took to be the one for which they were in search, but which in reality was the Rio Grande and well within Spanish territory. Here they built a rude fort and sent their surgeon on to Santa Fé to learn what he could of the place and the opportunity to trade there. News of the Burr-Wilkinson conspiracy had reached Santa Fé, and now that one of Wilkinson's officers was found with a company of troops on Spanish soil naturally awakened suspicion and alarm.

A force of Spanish soldiers was at once sent to the Rio Grande to "invite" Pike to come to Santa Fé and explain. There was nothing else for the Americans to do but comply. Knowing the fighting reputation that Pike later on acquired, we hardly think he would have allowed himself and men to have been taken so easily had his intentions been hostile in the beginning.

It was in July, 1807, before Pike was again back on American soil. His work in the southwest had been of much importance to the United States government, and prompt promotion followed.

In 1807 the trapper, Ezekial Williams, started out on a trapping tour of the far west. Williams had with him a noted Mandan chief, Big White, whom Lewis and Clark had induced to pay a visit to the national capital and whose safe return to his people had been guaranteed. As the Mandans and Sioux were now at war it behooved the whites to send a strong force to escort the chief back to his country. This Williams agreed to do.

Williams's party consisted of twenty men, well equipped for a two year campaign in the wilds. In addition to fire-arms and ammunition, each man carried six traps, for it was their intention once they had seen Big White safely home, to trap and explore in the wild region beyond the Missouri.

Hitherto the fur-traders had confined themselves to the great waterways of the country, traveling in birch-bark canoes, dugouts and keel-boats, portaging around rapids and falls and carrying the lighter craft on their shoulders from the head of one waterway to another. In the far north when the rivers were frozen over they had traveled on snow-shoes or dog-sled. The French trappers became especially expert in the use of the canoe, and this method has always been the principal mode of conveyance in the northern fur countries.

Horses began to appear among the indians during the latter years of the seventeenth century, and the trappers in many sections also availed themselves of their use.

The pack-train first came in use in Mexico, and from them our own trappers and borderers borrowed the art of packing. The equipment of one of these trains consisted of first putting a sheep-skin over the horse's or mule's back, then a blanket was placed on top of this, after which the huge pack-saddle was adjusted and loaded and lashed fast by means of a rope drawn so tightly that it seemed as if the poor animal would be cut in two. This seeming cruelty prevented the load from shifting and with the sheepskin and blankets prevented chafing. The number of pack-horses depended upon the size of the party and the quantity of luggage to be transported. Some parties required the use of several hundred horses. When making camp these packs were

placed upon the ground in careful order and covered over to protect them from dew or possible rain. These packs also offered splendid breastworks in case of a sudden attack by indians. Wagons came into use in a later day and to some extent superseded the pack-train.

Williams was a brave and experienced leader, but his men seem to have been unaccustomed to the life into which they were entering. They set out traps but forgot to fasten them, and of course when an animal was caught he made off with the trap; they lost themselves on the prairie and experienced all the hardships that went with the old plains life, but they were brave fellows and none thought of turning back. Little by little they learned by the hard school of experience, and always they moved ever onward toward the west. Hostile indians beset their path, and in a final disastrous encounter with them somewhere near the head of the Arkansas all save Williams and two others were killed; these three separated and each struck out for himself.

Williams made a skin canoe and started down the Arkansas, traveling at night and hiding in the willows along shore in the day time. It was not the most pleasant manner in which to travel, but Williams was far from being panic-stricken, and seems to have been in no especial hurry to leave the country. Trapper like, he kept his eyes ever open for beaver sign, and when he found them he set out his traps and remained there until he had caught the animals, when he would embark down stream again. In this manner he secured a most valuable cargo of furs, and when he at last unfortunately fell in with a band of Kansas indians he had one hundred and twenty-five beaver skins, in addition to many otter and other valuable furs. The Kansas indians

received him in a friendly manner and carried him with them on a war excursion against the Pawnees. Williams took an active part in the fighting and the Pawnees were severely defeated. The Kansas chief, much pleased with the white man's aid, allowed him to depart in peace, forgetting, however, to restore him the furs.

One of Williams's men, Edward Rose by name, had left the party some time before the disastrous fight at the head of the Arkansas and had gone off with a party of friendly Crows. The charms of a pretty girl had proved too much for the trapper, and so he abandoned his white companions to follow the dusky beauty. He married the girl, indian fashion, and eventually became a valued member of the tribe, in time becoming one of their chiefs. He had a very dark record behind him, and it is said he had belonged to a band of Mississippi river pirates shortly before joining Williams's party, although this was unknown at the time. In the company of savages he no doubt felt much more at ease than he did among honest trappers of his own color. Frequent mention is made of this man in old books and journals of the time.

Recent research has convinced many historians that the records of the Williams's expedition are inaccurate and that the date, 1807, assigned the expedition is several years earlier than it should be.

In 1811, Captain Becknell led a trading expedition into the country of the Comanches, and was so pleased with the results that the next year he went on to New Mexico and made a splendid profit on his goods.

Later on Auguste Chouteau established himself on an island in the Arkansas, on the border of the United

States and the Spanish possessions in Mexico. This was the start of a brisk trade with Santa Fé, which continued to grow and prosper until the Santa Fé trail became a well known and much traveled highway. It proved, as the Spaniards feared it would, an entering wedge of the Americans which in time was to split off a portion of their territory.

Besides such large parties as those led by Williams, Becknell, Chouteau and others, there were individual trappers who singly and alone traversed the most lonely plains and inaccessible mountains in search of valuable furs. They were driven ever insensibly onward and onward, in spite of indian hostility or the varied dangers of the untamed wilderness, with that wanderlust with which the very veins of Americans were charged in those days.

After becoming thoroughly acquainted with the vast regions lying between the Missouri and the Rockies, we will see these hardy men pushing on through the mountain passes into the regions beyond, whither a tardy government was to send its "pathfinders" almost a quarter of a century later.

It is safe to say that, save for Lewis and Clark, no government expedition ever explored anything in the west that had not previously been discovered by some one of these early knights of the fur-trade. These grizzled men always led the way; it remained for the government to measure and map the country.

Chapter XVI

John Jacob Astor and the Fur-trade

John Jacob Astor and the Fur-trade

The success of the old Hudson's Bay Company and its rival, the Northwest Company, stimulated the organization of other companies along the same lines. One, the X. Y. Company, after a brief existence, was incorporated with the Northwest Company; another, the Mackinaw Company, with headquarters at Michillimackinac, carried on a thriving business with the Indians of the upper Mississippi and Great Lakes region. All these organizations were operated by British subjects. In the United States there was as yet no organized trade.

In 1784, John Jacob Astor, a native of Walldorf, Germany, arrived at Baltimore. On the way over this enterprising emigrant made the acquaintance of a fur dealer and by him was induced to invest his small fortune in furs. Carrying these furs over to London, Astor received such handsome returns that he came back to America, resolved to devote his life to the fur-trade.

Astor's first purchases were made from the Northwest Company at Montreal, and these he resold in the United States or shipped to Europe, receiving such handsome remuneration that he resolved to cut loose from the old company and enter the field independently. In 1809, he founded the American Fur Company, with a capital of one million dollars, and privilege of increasing same to two millions.

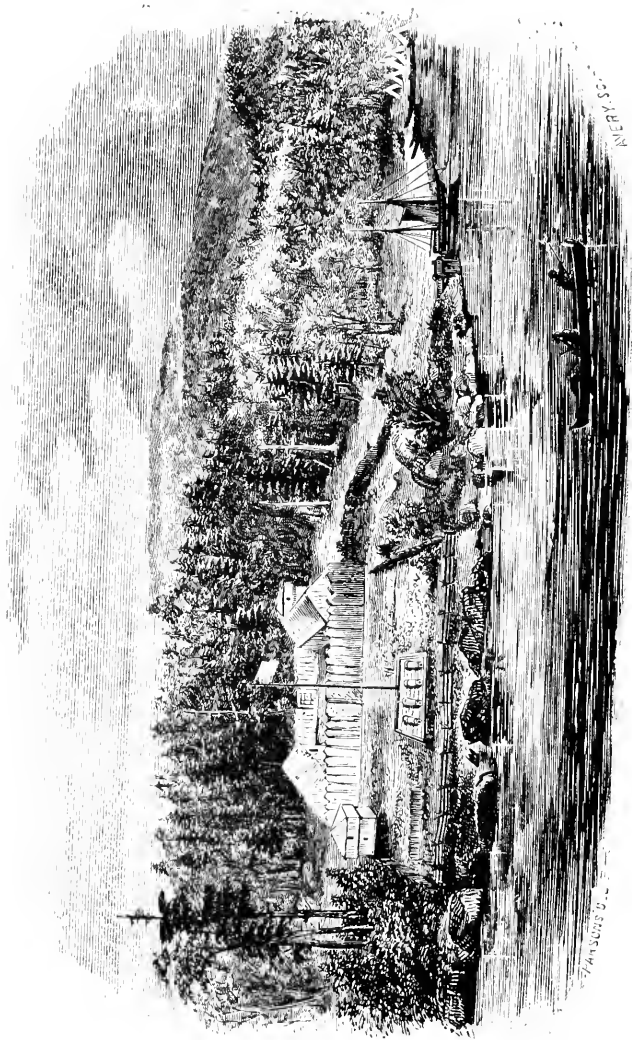
Two years later he bought out the Mackinaw Company and presented a plan for the capture of all the trade in American territories. His idea was to establish a line of posts all along the Missouri, the Columbia and their principal tributaries, with headquarters at the mouth of the Columbia. Ships were to be sent out annually from New York, where Astor was to remain looking after the financial end of the enterprise, with supplies for the Pacific posts. Here they were to take on the cargo of fur and carry it over to the great fur mart at Canton, China, there to dispose of them and reload with tea and other oriental products, and then sail for New York. Arrangements were also made to carry supplies to the Russians in Alaska, and cultivate further friendly relations with them. Astor wished to avoid friction with the Northwest Company, whose territory bounded his own, but feeling secure in their own position they scorned all his proffered offers of coöperation.

Astor chose able men for his associates in this Pacific venture. One of them, Alexander Mackay, had been with Mackenzie in his famous trip to the Arctic and across the continent to the Pacific; he was of invaluable assistance to Astor in arranging details. Another valuable man was Wilson Price Hunt, of New Jersey. Other noteworthy men were David Stuart, his nephew, Robert Stuart, Duncan McDougal and Donald McKenzie.

Two expeditions were hurriedly fitted out. One was to go by sea from New York, by the long, dreary way around Cape Horn and thence up the Pacific coast to the Columbia; the other was to go by land up the valley of the Missouri and across the mountains to the designated meeting place on the Columbia.

The sea expedition was the first to get away. In Sep-

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AN EARLY FUR-TRADING STATION
Fort Astoria near the mouth of the Columbia river in 1813

tember, 1810, the good ship, *Tonquin*, in command of Captain Thorn, sailed, with the supplies and a part of the traders on board. It proved anything but a harmonious voyage. The traders were under orders of Duncan McDougal, a fussy little Scotchman, who had long served the Northwest Company but who, disappointed in promotion, or lack of promotion, had quit the Canadian Company to take service with Astor. McDougal and Thorn soon clashed, and there was bad blood between them ever after.

Cape Horn was doubled on Christmas day and Hawaii was reached in February, where thirty islanders were engaged for service with the company. Late in March, 1811, the *Tonquin* entered the *Columbia*. Eight lives were lost in attempting to run small boats against the tide. A war of words ensued between Thorn and McDougal, and ended only when the former landed cargo and passengers and sailed away up the coast on a trading voyage.

The place chosen for their fort and the future headquarters of the company was on the south bank of the river, some distance up from its mouth. In honor of the founder of the enterprise they named the place Astoria.

Woods and mountains were wrapped in all the beauty and glory of spring-time as the traders and their assistants began work on their fort. Rejoicing to find terra firma beneath their feet once more and free from what they considered the tyranny of Captain Thorn, all hands worked with a will, and the echo of ax and hammer resounded through the hitherto silent aisles of the forests.

But, in spite of all this promising beginning, clouds hovered on the horizon, war between America and

England was imminent, and any day might bring word that hostilities had begun. The nor'westers, too, were to be feared, for, whether the nations were at war or not, these not over-scrupulous traders might any day sweep down and break up the establishment. Suspicions were also felt by some in regard to McDougal. Having quit the Canadians and come over to Mr. Astor, might he not again experience a change of heart and mind and turn traitor to him also?

The fears of the traders in regard to McDougal received speedy confirmation. A small party of nor'westers, under David Thompson, suddenly appeared. McDougal received them with open arms, and his conduct from this time on was such that many have accused him of striking a bargain with Thompson for the ruin of Astoria. Thompson remained long enough to see all he wished to see, and then returned up the Columbia to a post he had established on its upper reaches. The Americans had anticipated him in planting a post at the mouth of the great river.

Dreadful news came from the north in regard to the Tonquin and her crew, which plunged Astoria into the deepest gloom. Thorn, the Tonquin's commander, had been a most efficient naval officer, but his knowledge of men did not include the indian. He also was a poor trader and moreover, not inclined to either seek or accept advice from those who did possess the necessary knowledge. From the very first he had not gotten along with the partners, while he held the naked savages in supreme contempt. Contrary to all advice he allowed the indians to swarm over the deck in large numbers, giving them every opportunity to effect a surprise, an opportunity they were not slow to take advantage of.

One morning they crowded upon deck in larger numbers than usual, were much easier to deal with, but confined their purchases mainly to knives and other weapons. The sharp eyes of the experienced old nor'wester, Mackay, rapidly took in the situation, and he at once made known his fears to the captain, requesting that the deck be cleared at once, but the stubborn Thorn refused to see anything amiss and ignored the trader's request. Nevertheless, even his dull eyes were at last opened, and he gave orders to clear the ship, but too late. A wild whoop resounded over the deck, and at the signal, for signal it was, the deadly work of knife and tomahawk was begun. Thorn and Mackay were soon cut down and pitched overboard, where they were finished up by the squaws who remained in the canoes alongside. The clerk, Lewis, was desperately wounded and fell headlong down the companion way. The crew, though taken by surprise, seized whatever came handy to them and defended themselves as best they could, but they stood no show against the overwhelming numbers of well-armed savages that surrounded them. Four men finally reached the cabin and barricaded themselves, opening such a hot fire upon the indians from their sheltered position that the latter scrambled into their boats pell mell and put for the shore, their flight being further hastened by discharges from the deck cannon, which the survivors turned upon them with telling results.

That night the four men, being too few in number to handle the ship, attempted to escape in a small boat, but they were delayed by head winds and finally compelled to go ashore, where they fell into the hands of the savages and were put to death with all the fiendish cruelty their minds could invent. Lewis, the clerk, was too

badly wounded to attempt flight with his comrades, and remained to take a terrible vengeance upon the savages.

Appearing alone upon the deserted deck, he beckoned the indians to come aboard, and when the deck was well crowded he fired the magazine. There was a terrific explosion. The savages on shore saw the air suddenly filled with pieces of the ship, arms, legs and bodies of the warriors who had crowded aboard. Lewis, of course, had himself perished in the explosion, as he had designed doing, but he had exacted a high price for his life, over two hundred savages having perished, besides many more badly maimed and crippled.

The visit of the nor'westers and the loss of the Tonquin alarmed the Astorians as to their own situation. McDougal secured the friendship of the neighboring tribes by means of the famous threat of letting loose the smallpox, which he told them he kept corked up in a bottle, in case they gave the traders any trouble. Knowing that the smallpox was a disease which always followed in the wake of the white man, and frightened at the terrible ravages the dread disease had worked among various tribes, the indians readily promised to keep the peace. To further strengthen their position, McDougal wooed and wed the daughter of the chief, Comcomly. The defenses of the fort were strengthened, the men drilled for war, and other posts established further up the Columbia.

The arrival of Hunt with the overland expedition greatly augmented the forces at Astoria and greatly lessened the gloom that had settled over the place. Hunt had experienced much difficulty in securing men for his proposed expedition. In Canada the powerful Northwest Company threw every obstacle in his way, and at

Saint Louis the opposition of Manuel Lisa was encountered; the nor'westers wanted no traders save their own in the Columbia country, while Lisa was aiming at a monopoly of the upper Missouri trade. Hunt had to content himself with hiring inferior men for the most part, but with this motley crew he finally got away in the spring of 1811.

When Hunt found himself ready to start he found that his rival, Lisa, was also to head an expedition up river. Lisa claimed the object of his journey was the rescue of the party of trappers headed by Andrew Henry who, while trapping in the Blackfoot country, had been attacked by those indians and driven over the mountains into the Snake river region, but Hunt thought the Spaniard only wanted to get ahead of him to supply the indians with weapons and ammunition, and then incite the latter to attack him. Whatever Lisa's reasons were, the result was a race between the two rivals. Hunt had the start but Lisa finally overtook him, and a stormy interview followed which would no doubt have ended in bloodshed had it not been for the friendly intervention of two Englishmen who were traveling in company with Lisa. After this the two parties traveled along together in harmony.

Hunt's party numbered some sixty men, among which were three men who had formerly served under Andrew Henry, and who had partially explored the country drained by the Yellowstone and the Big Horn. The names of these three trappers were Rezner, Hoback and Robinson; they and the squaw man Edward Rose, who had come into the Crow country with Williams in 1807(?) and who now engaged himself to Hunt as interpreter, were of much value to the party until this

section of country was left behind, while from thence onward for long stretches of country they were on entirely new territory.

On September 16, they crossed the continental divide somewhere in the vicinity of Union pass, and ten days later they were on Snake river. Here seven men were left to trap in the region, while with the rest Hunt floated down the Snake in canoes.

Meeting with disaster at Calderon Linn, the party split into three detachments and set out by different routes: one under the veteran nor'wester McKenzie followed the Clearwater, the Snake and the Columbia, arriving at Astoria a month in advance of Hunt, who followed the main stream (the Snake), while the third party under Ramsay Crooks came in at a still later date. This expedition of Hunt's had extended the knowledge of the upper waters of the Columbia and its tributaries.

The sending out of trading and trapping parties and the establishment of outlying posts weakened the garrison at Astoria. When Mr. Astor's supply ship, the Beaver, arrived, Mr. Hunt sailed in her to Alaska to strengthen relations with the Russian traders there and arrange a plan of coöperation, but in so doing the strength of the place was further reduced. Hunt's mission to the Russians was entirely successful, but as it turned out his presence in Astoria at the time would have been far more valuable.

War had broken out between America and England, and the nor'westers already had two expeditions sent out against Astoria. One expedition went by sea in, the Isaac Todd, and was commanded by Donald McTavish; a sloop of war, the Raccoon, also was added to this sea

force later on. The other expedition went by land and was led by John George McTavish and the celebrated trader Alexander Henry, the younger. They came by way of the Saskatchewan, crossed the Rockies at Yellowhead pass, and striking the upper waters of the Columbia descended it in boats to Astoria.

The Americans were for fighting for their rights and old Comcomly rallied his warriors to defend the interests of his white son-in-law, but McDougal received the nor'westers as friends and even forbade the raising of the American colors, although the English were not so careful of American feelings as to forbear showing their own flag. It appears that McDougal had acted queerly ever since Thompson's visit, and there are those who accuse him of making a bargain with the nor'westers at that time. That he was received back into the company and even given command of one of their posts seems to give color to the accusation.

The Raccoon, now put in her appearance and Astoria was handed over to the enemy. Old Comcomly was indignant at the tame ending of the affair, and said his daughter had made a mistake and had married a squaw. When, the Isaac Todd, came with the new governor, McTavish, a wild scene of debauchery and drunkenness followed. Astoria was renamed Fort George, and the British ensign replaced the American on the flagstaff. Drinking and carousing was the order of the day under Governor McTavish, but an end came to all this when the governor and Alexander Henry the younger were drowned in the Columbia. Their boat upset when returning from one of their wild carousels.

It is a pity that Hunt was absent when the nor'westers arrived. He undoubtedly would not have given in to

them without a fight; certainly he would not have bargained away his furs for one-tenth their real value as did McDougal.

The fall of Astoria ended Mr. Astor's efforts on the Pacific coast, and although the peace of 1814 restored the place to America, the nor'westers were allowed a free hand in the region for many years to come.

Chapter XVII

Return of the Astorians - the American Fur Company

Return of the Astorians - the American Fur Company

In June, 1812, some months before Astoria was surrendered to the nor'westers, Robert Stuart with six other men was sent overland with dispatches for Mr. Astor. They proceeded up the Columbia and the Snake to near Calderon Linn, where they met the trappers who had been left to operate in that region by Mr. Hunt. They reported that they had gone south to a river which emptied into the ocean and had trapped there. This river was no doubt the Bear, which empties into Great Salt lake. One of these trappers, a Mr. Miller, undertook to act as guide for the party, but he seems to have proved a rather poor one, and led them aimlessly about for some time.

Crossing over the Teton range Stuart's party again did some aimless wandering, striking Green river and finally a large indian trail leading to the southward, but they soon abandoned this trail and again struck off on their own accord, finally coming to the Sweetwater. It is thought that Stuart crossed the divide at the famous South pass, but others maintain that they crossed near by, but not through the pass itself, and, that Fitzpatrick with a band of mountain trappers were the first actual users of the pass some years later (in 1824). Still others have it that Étienne Provot used the

pass in 1823, thus being one year in advance of Fitzpatrick. Like many another controversy, this question will probably never be settled conclusively. One fact remains unquestioned – the region was first explored by fur-traders and trappers and not by John C. Fremont who, at the head of a United States government expedition “explored” it almost a quarter of a century later.

Stuart’s party was now forced to go into camp on the eastern side of the mountains, as an attempt to cross the open plains in the face of the severe weather which had now set in, would have invited certain disaster. By skillful and persistent hunting they succeeded in laying up a bountiful supply of meat for the winter. They were overjoyed with the prospect of wintering in a snug camp, feasting and resting securely after their hard summer’s campaigning in the wilderness.

These happy dreams were rudely dispelled one day when a party of hungry indians made their appearance and demanded food. Knowing that it would be folly to refuse the travelers made a virtue of necessity and invited the savages to help themselves, which they did with such good will that when they finally withdrew the white men were left nearly destitute.

Fearing a return of these unwelcome guests they moved on to another section and established new winter quarters. Fortunately they found game still plentiful, and again restocked their depleted larder.

When spring weather came to the plains the party again broke camp and proceeded on to Saint Louis, reaching the place after ten months of hardship and adventure.

After the break up of Astor’s establishment on the Columbia, many of his Canadian employees took ser-

vice under their old masters, the nor'westers, but the Americans were scattered far and near. Some of them accompanied the returning nor'westers on their eastern journey by way of the Columbia and across the continental divide to the headwaters of the Saskatchewan, on past Lake Winnipeg to the Northwest Company's headquarters at Fort William on Lake Superior. They suffered much discomfort from cold and hunger during the journey, at one time being obliged to subsist on horse meat, but this was a common experience of all early travelers, and they made little account of such trifles.

At Fort William a flotilla of fifty canoes, accompanied by a guard of three hundred men, was organized to carry the accumulated furs down to Montreal. This cargo contained over one million dollars worth of furs, including the spoils taken at Astoria. The brigade offered a most tempting prize for any American force it might meet.

Overtaking a couple of boats containing the crew of an English ship that had been captured by two American schooners which were at that moment hovering about the Sault looking for prizes, the brigade halted and an officer hurried on to Mackinac to obtain help.

The English traders succeeded in surprising one of the American vessels at the Sault, boarded her and pinned the crew to the deck with their bayonets. Then in the captured vessel they bore down upon its consort and captured it also.

From time to time the Americans witnessed with sorrow evidences of the cruelty of the war waged along the border, when England's savage allies were met returning to Canada with scalps and plunder. Neither England nor America can feel a great amount of pride

in the way land operations were conducted in the war of 1812-1815, for while there were some brilliant feats of arms, yet the general character of the operations was of a blundering nature and reflected scant credit upon either of the combatants. England's worst crime was the employment of indians against the unprotected frontiers.

The peace of Ghent restored all captured places, and Captain Biddle was sent around the Horn in the sloop of war *Ontario* to repossess the Oregon country, but the nor'westers had taken possession of all the American fur-posts and the indians had massacred all the scattered bands of American trappers, so that the reaffirming of our rights made but little change in the situation.

The feeble Madison administration had dreadfully mismanaged the war, and its blunderings did not cease with hostilities, for no support was given Mr. Astor in reëstablishing himself on the Columbia, and knowing as he did that without such aid he could make no headway against rivals so strongly entrenched, he gave up all idea of trade beyond the Rockies and confined himself to the regions east of those mountains.

"I have no idea of remaining quiet or idle," Mr. Astor wrote a friend, and, immediately he set about to secure the whole trade of the United States proper. It will be remembered that the Oregon country had been taken possession of by Gray and likewise by Vancouver, and America and England each had in consequence claimed possession — a claim that was only settled by compromise a great many years later.

In 1815, a law was passed by congress forbidding British traders from operating on American territory, but this law of course was not applicable to Oregon

because of undetermined boundaries. All British posts east of the Rockies, however, passed into American hands, and in this case into Mr. Astor's hands. Astor had already bought out the American half of the Mackinaw Company, and it was not long before he was supreme in his chosen field, save for the small bands of free traders who held their own against all comers.

Ramsay Crooks, Robert Stuart and others of the Astorians who had remained loyal to their leader, continued in his employ, and the memory of the injustice and hardships they had suffered from British rivals made them bitter partisans indeed. Rival traders need expect slight consideration at their hands.

The abandonment of the British posts also threw out of employment many able traders, who now came over to Mr. Astor and added to his strength. The American Fur Company was in a position to give the nor'westers a hard fight.

One of those Northwest Company men who came over to Astor was Kenneth McKenzie, and to him was assigned the duty of capturing the trade of the upper Missouri. At his headquarters at Fort Union, at the mouth of the Yellowstone, he ruled over the surrounding country like a monarch, living in such luxurious and regal style that he came to be known far and wide as the "King of the Missouri."

McKenzie crushed all opposition of the nearby free-traders by paying the indians twice as much as his furs were worth, and of course all small traders who sought to compete with him were ruined. He catered to the indian's love of pomp and show by meeting them at the gate of the fort decked out in gay and gaudy apparel and escorting them in to the music of fife and

drum. The free-traders were bitter toward him because of his shutting out methods, and they actually had the nerve to build a rival post near Fort Union and make a bid for the indian trade, but this was mere folly on their part, as they could not hope to compete successfully with the shrewdness of McKenzie and the money of Mr. Astor. The post was soon abandoned by the traders and later taken possession of by a band of French desperadoes from Canada, who made themselves so troublesome that the men of Fort Union, whose patience probably was not hard to exhaust, stormed the place and shot them down like dogs.

As far back as 1796, the government had been fostering a system of government controlled trade with the indians, with an idea of supplying the latter with needful articles at fair prices, but it nullified whatever good it might have accomplished by issuing licenses to individuals permitting them to trade with the savages. This foolish system, of course, proved costly and unprofitable to both indian and government, and was finally abandoned. It is said that Mr. Astor was instrumental in persuading congress to abolish government participation in trade. Thus step by step did the shrewd trader and financier strengthen his position.

Chapter XVIII

British and American traders in Oregon
and the Rockies

British and American traders in Oregon and the Rockies

After the ousting of the Americans from the Oregon country and the renaming of Astoria after their own king, the Northwest Fur Company set about to make themselves secure in the country. All the old American establishments they took over and new posts were built at favorable points until at last they had thirteen fortified trading posts south of 49°, besides others just north of that line. These places were named Vancouver, Boise, Disappointment, George, Oakanagan, Kootenai, Flathead, Cowlitz, Nisqualli, Coleville, Walla Walla and Umpqua. Fort Vancouver, built in 1824, supplanted Fort George (Astoria) as headquarters.

The Columbia and its main tributaries had by this time been pretty well explored. Gray and Vancouver had first seen its lower courses; Lewis and Clark, Andrew Henry and the Astorians had explored the southern or Lewis branch of the great river, while David Thompson had done the same for the north branch. The Snake and all the main rivers tributary to the Columbia were by this time pretty well known, and it only remained for the newcomers to fill in the details.

In 1816, the nor'westers decided to extend land operations on the south and west toward California and the mountains, embracing a new and unexplored tract of

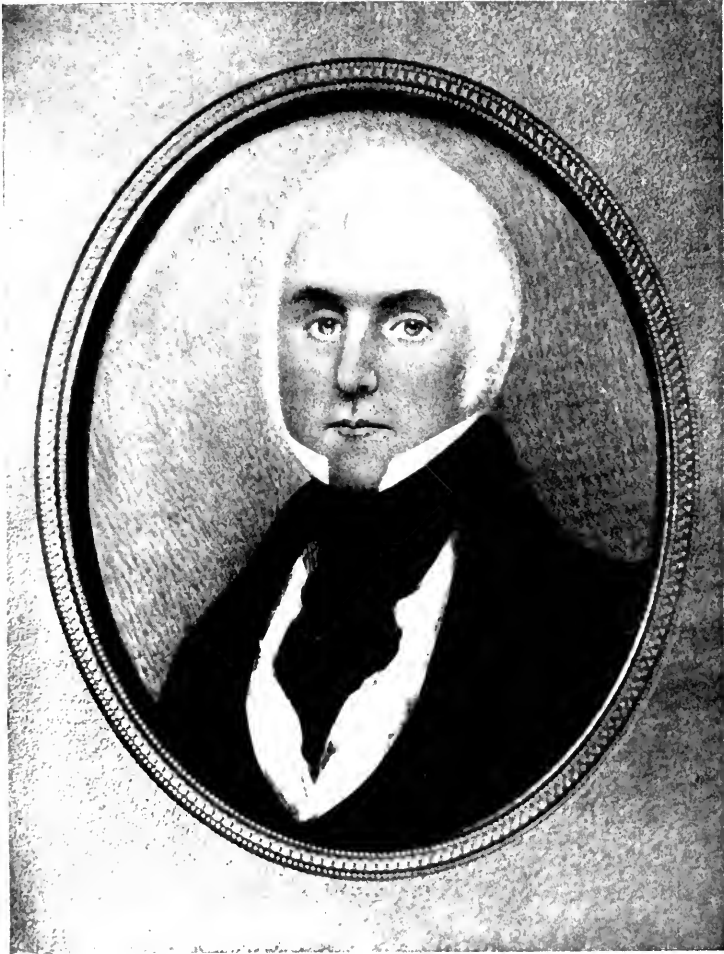
country. To accomplish this work and obviate the necessity of numerous trading posts they adopted the plan, always a favorite one with American traders and trappers, of fitting out strong parties under the most capable leaders to range the country for furs, buying from the natives and trapping on their own account, delivering their furs at the end of the season at headquarters on the Columbia. The Northwest Company, as well as the Hudson's Bay Company, had always depended upon the canoe brigades to carry supplies into the indian country and the furs out of it, the splendid network of Canadian rivers making this the most practical way of handling the business, but in the American west traders, trappers and indians depended more upon horses as a means of conveyance and transportation. The north-westerners now adopted the same plan in Oregon. The men chosen to lead these trading excursions were Donald McKenzie, Alexander Ross, John Work and Peter Skene Ogden, the first two having already served in the country in Mr. Astor's employ.

In 1818, the first of these expeditions was sent out with McKenzie in command. They went up the Columbia until a good beaver country was reached, but the indians proved hostile and so they skirted the mountains until Snake river was reached. Here McKenzie found himself on ground with which he had become acquainted while serving with the Astorians. The next year he pushed on south of the Snake into new territory, intending to explore the country and cultivate friendly relations with whatever indian tribes he might meet. We cannot be sure of the exact route of this expedition, but it is surmised that it reached Bear river in southern Idaho.

In 1821, the amalgamation of the Northwest and Hudson's Bay companies was consummated, and under the new management the posts in Oregon became known as Hudson's Bay posts, the united company assuming the old company's name, but retaining the employes of the nor'westers. The events leading up to and compelling this union will be treated in another chapter.

In February, 1824, Alexander Ross left Flathead House and proceeded to the southeast toward the dangerous Blackfoot country at the head of the Missouri, where so many American trappers had lost their lives. Striking the trail of Lewis and Clark in the Bitter Root valley he followed it as far as Lemhi river in Idaho, from which place he proceeded to the Salmon, where he began operations. A party of Iroquois trappers had previously been sent to the region of the Three Tetons to trap, and Ross sent a party of his men to search for these trappers. The Blackfeet turned this party back. The Iroquois soon made their appearance, however, robbed of all that they possessed. With the Iroquois was a party of American trappers, among whom was Jedediah Smith, who is described by Ross as being "a leading person." The united party, English, American and Indian, now returned to Flathead House.

Peter Ogden now took charge of the work of exploration. He made a number of combined trapping, trading and exploring expeditions between the years 1824 and 1828, but there is much uncertainty as to his route much of the time. Only a portion of Ogden's journals have come to light, and accordingly some of the most important discoveries attributed to him can not be proven. It is claimed that he reached the Great Salt lake in 1824, but he states in his journal of 1828, that he



DR. JOHN McLOUGHLIN

From a miniature painted on ivory in 1838 or 1839

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of southern Oregon, and in succeeding seasons he explored much of the country to the north and west of Great Salt lake, and even penetrated into California. Another Hudson's Bay trader, Donald McKay, also conducted some valuable explorations in northern California and Nevada at this time.

Mr. H. C. Dale, in a most praiseworthy and carefully prepared book on the fur-trade and early western discovery says: "One of the most noteworthy features of all the discovery and exploration crowded into this first third of the century is the simultaneity of it. Wherever an Englishman penetrated there an American was sure to be a few months before or a few months after him. This, of course, was more true of the region north of the forty-second parallel than south of it. In the Columbia drainage area, the American trappers had free reign though their rewards were less."

The most noted personage that appeared during the Hudson's Bay occupancy of Oregon was Dr. John McLoughlin, who for a time was chief factor on the Pacific coast. He was a keen trader and served his employers faithfully, but he would not put in force some of the harsh decrees issued from London for the suppression of American competition and, contrary to orders, he succored stranded and starving rivals on several occasions, and even sent expeditions against the indians to recover property stolen from Americans. He treated the missionaries, Whitman and Lee, with great kindness, even though he himself was of the Catholic faith. Absolute justice was meted out to those subject to his authority, and he treated all rivals as he himself would desire to be treated. His policy did not suit those over

him, and he was criticised so severely that he resigned his position.

Though Astor's plans for the establishment of American fur-trade in Oregon and the colonization of the country had failed because of the disasters resulting from war with Britain and the apathy of the American government at the close of hostilities, yet daring American traders came again into the region and their fur brigades continued to sweep up the valleys in the beaver filled streams of the Rockies. It is said that in 1822, there were more than a thousand men, chiefly from Saint Louis, employed in the fur-trade of the upper Missouri and five hundred on the upper Mississippi.

Manuel Lisa had founded the Missouri Fur Company early in the century, and for many years he continued to be the leading factor in the great fur-trade game. His plans were to establish forts and trading posts at strategic places, but in later years this plan was changed to a considerable extent, and white men were hired to do the trapping and less dependence placed upon the warlike and fickle natives for furs. These trappers would form into small bands and scatter out over the trapping grounds, meeting once a year at an appointed place of rendezvous, where supplies were collected and the accumulated furs sorted, baled and transported down to Saint Louis, which city was to the Americans what Montreal was to the Canadians, the chief center of the fur-trade.

Andrew Henry had been the first American to engage in the Rocky mountain trade, while associated with Lisa, and had suffered discouraging reverses at the hands of the Blackfeet, but, now again, a full decade later, he once more led a party into the fur country.

This time he was associated with William Ashley, who now for the first time appears in the fur-trade.

Andrew Henry's party left Saint Louis in March, 1822, and proceeded up the Missouri to the mouth of the Yellowstone, where they established headquarters. In an accident on the river they had lost goods valued at \$10,000, but such trifles had never turned back a true fur-trader, and so Henry had gone on. Hostility with the Blackfeet followed, and a number of trappers were killed. Coming up the river with additional men Ashley was attacked at the Arikara villages and defeated with heavy loss.

The defeat of Ashley and the massacre of a party of trappers, under Immell and Jones, on the Yellowstone, caused the American commander at Fort Atkinson, Colonel Leavenworth, to lead a force of two hundred and fifty troops against the hostiles. Leavenworth was joined by sixty Missouri Fur Company men under Joshua Pilcher and later by Ashley's party and men hurriedly sent down the river by Andrew Henry.

The Sioux, seeing such a large force marching to attack their enemies, the Arikara, joined forces with Leavenworth. We can imagine what a Custer or a Miles would have done had they been in command of so formidable a force, but Leavenworth was of a different stamp, and instead of striking swiftly and terribly he attacked feebly, then entered into a parley, and retired after the savages had returned the plunder they had taken from Ashley. The trappers were exasperated and the Sioux disgusted at the tame results of the expedition, while the hostiles who had not been very seriously impressed with the prowess of American arms, were soon robbing and murdering the same as before.

Henry led his trappers back to the Yellowstone and sent out bands in all directions to trap. These small parties met with many adventures and disasters. Fights with indians and with grizzly bears were of common occurrence, but the country was thoroughly explored on all sides. It was at this time that Fitzpatrick discovered South pass and Bridger the Great Salt lake, although, as we have already noted, both these achievements have been claimed for other parties.

Associated with Henry and Ashley in their trading and trapping enterprises were many men of prominence in Rocky mountain history, Jedediah Smith, Jim Bridger, Jim Beckwourth, David Jackson, William Sublette, Louis Vasquez, Edward Rose, Hugh Glass and Thomas Fitzpatrick – “the most significant group of continental explorers ever brought together.”

All of Andrew Henry's operations in the Rockies had been attended with disaster and financial loss and he now gave up the business for good, his place being taken by Jedediah Smith. Smith traveled and traded extensively in the Snake river country, and is accused by the English of having secured a valuable lot of furs from some of their trappers in a questionable manner. He traveled frequently in company with Ross and Ogden and made a most thorough study of the region, linking up the explorations of the American traders and explorers that had preceded him. He and his companions were well able to compete with such great monopolies as the American and Hudson's Bay companies, and sometimes did not scruple to obtain the furs rightfully belonging to those corporations.

When Ashley finally quit the fur business he had a fortune of \$80,000 to show for his labors. Ashley had

conducted a series of valuable explorations in the regions about the Great Salt lake; Smith later took up the work where Ashley left off and continued it on up the Spanish settlements on the Pacific, thus doing for the central part of the continent what Lewis, Clark and Mackenzie had done to the northward.

Chapter XIX

Union of the Northwest and Hudson's Bay companies

Union of the Northwest and Hudson's Bay companies

While the nor'westers were ridding themselves of rivals on the Pacific coast, taking over their forts and garrisoning them with their own men and dreaming of the monopolizing of the fur-trade of the entire west, Mr. Astor was not sleeping, neither was the ancient and honorable gentleman of the Hudson's Bay asleep. Awakened at last from her long lethargy the old company was girding her loins for a death struggle with her upstart rival. The nor'westers were not slow to take up the gauntlet thrown them. They had beaten the Americans at Astoria and would give this new foe a warm reception.

When Mr. Astor was in Montreal banqueting with the northwestern men and becoming fascinated by the possibilities of the trade, another man was sharing the hospitality of the traders and likewise fascinated by what he saw and heard. This man was none other than Lord Selkirk, who had just recently established a settlement on Prince Edward island and was now eager to gain a footing in the far west. He returned to London and purchased enough stock in the Hudson's Bay Company to give him full control. In 1812, he established a colony of Scotchmen and Irishmen on the Red river of the north which was to serve as protection against

the nor'westers. These newcomers the latter discouraged and paid to leave the country. Hostilities soon followed.

From their post at Fort Garry, now Winnipeg, the Hudson's Bay men glared sullenly in the direction of their rivals at Fort Gibraltar and the nor'westers glared back. It only required a spark to fire off deadly train that was being laid. This spark was supplied when Miles McDonell, commander at Fort Douglass, issued a proclamation ordering all nor'westers out of the country and forbidding indians to trade with them. Cuthbert Grant, with a force of turbulent halfbreeds, marched to Fort Douglass and opened fire upon the place. McDonell surrendered and was promptly sent out of the country by the nor'westers.

Duncan Cameron, commander of Fort Gibraltar, had winked at the lawless acts of Grant, but he was now to suffer in turn, for falling into the hands of his rivals soon after he was severely flogged. A little later a party of Hudson's Bay men surprised Fort Gibraltar, plundered the place and burned it to the ground. Mr. Cameron was shipped out of the country in revenge for the expulsion of McDonell.

These events ushered in the war of the fur-traders. Murder and robbery became the order of the day, while the indians, always ready for bloodshed and plunder, thus encouraged by the lawless acts of their white associates, took a hand in the game.

The loss of Gibraltar was a serious loss to the nor'westers, as it was an important outfitting point, and fearing that the expected supply brigade, which was known to be on its way to the fort, might also fall into the enemy's hands and thus seriously cripple them, by

depriving them of needed supplies, Cuthbert Grant was sent to rescue the brigade at all hazards. Governor Semple thought Grant's army was on its way to attack the Selkirk settlements so he raised such a force as he could and hurried to intercept Grant. The two forces met on the evening of June 19, 1816, at a place called Seven Oaks. Grant could not control his savage followers, and an indiscriminate massacre followed. Governor Semple was brutally murdered as he lay desperately wounded, and when the last shots of the conflict had died away the beautiful green of the prairie was reddened with the blood of Hudson's Bay men. Made fiendish at the sight of the carnage they had wrought, the indians and scarce less savage half-breeds ran from body to body, horribly mutilating the bodies of the slain and eagerly quaffing of the blood in true savage fashion.

Seven Oaks was a frightful affair, but it was the crisis. Lord Selkirk was strong with the government and the government, as usual, was partial to the Hudson's Bay Company. A force of British red-coats well equipped with supplies and war material was furnished Selkirk, and with these he appeared before the nor'westers famous old stronghold at Fort William. Trenches were dug, cannon planted, and every preparation made for the storming of the place. To oppose the uniformed troops of the British government was more than the nor'westers were prepared to do, despite their reckless courage and lack of regard for law, so they surrendered the place with the best grace possible.

Fort Douglass was surprised by the soldiers one stormy night some six months later, and other places followed. The nor'westers realized that the game was up and were ready for peace. Likewise the Hudson's

Bay men were guilty of offenses which they did not wish investigated, and so the officials of the rival companies did the only sensible thing there was to do and joined forces, each agreeing to forget the past. The union was effected in March, 1821, the name of Hudson's Bay Company being retained.

Triumphant in Canada and expelled from American territory by a United States law, the Hudson's Bay Company's history from this time on offers little of interest, except that it has continued to exist down to today, in spite of the increasing settlements and advance of civilization in its territories.

In 1870, arrangements were made by which the great company surrendered its exclusive jurisdiction over the immense territory reaching from the United States boundaries to the frozen Arctic, and all westward from Lake Superior, to the Canadian government. Small tracts of land about the fur-posts were reserved, however, and here the old company continues to hold forth with something of its old time grandeur. The trade of the company is still large, and it is the only one of the many fur companies that has continued down to our day.

Take a map of Canada today and you will notice that over much of its northern territory, the only place names you will see is the well known H. B. C., which marks one of the many posts of that far-flung trade empire. Up yonder under the light of the north star, and of the midnight sun, the fur-trader and his employees are the only human inhabitants, save for a few scattering indians and Eskimo, who today are totally dependent upon the posts for their existence. Railways thread the more southern portions of the fur-trade

realm of the long ago, but ox carts, those ponderous, screeching contrivances that were so common in the Red river settlements in the old days, still bring in the furs to the posts along the Mackenzie, while brigades of canoes are still not uncommon in the more remote regions. In winter, when the rivers are blocked with ice and canoe travel impossible, the husky dog still draws loaded sleds from one post to another. The swish of the sled runner on the snow, the tinkle of the bells on the huskies' harness, and the crack of the driver's whip still awaken the echoes of the long northern nights.

The isolated posts get their mail more frequently than in the days of long ago, but the coming of the mail pack is just as eagerly looked forward to, and all items of news from the outside and more favored portions of the earth are eagerly scanned.

In the early days the Hudson's Bay, the Northwest and the various American trading companies sold liquor to the indians, but seeing the demoralizing and degrading effects it was having upon them the Hudson's Bay Company stopped the practice. It must be said that the great company, with all its faults, always looked to the welfare of the indian. A sober, honest or industrious indian in their employ was never allowed to come to want.

Before starting out on his annual trapping expedition, the indian and his squaw were taken into the fort, and with the advice of the chief factor an outfit was selected. The trader's aim was to help the indian to secure what would likely prove most needful to him and to eliminate unnecessaries with which the savage might otherwise encumber himself and perhaps be unable to pay for with the proceeds of the season's

catch. The outfit was then charged against him, to be deducted from his pay when the season's work was over.

The reckless, wasteful methods of the American trader and trapper in taking fur in any manner possible, regardless of the future supply, has been avoided by the Hudson's Bay Company. Absolute masters of the territory they occupied, they enacted laws protecting fur bearers at certain seasons, and when any fur bearing animal was threatened with extermination they prohibited his being taken for a number of years until increase of the animal made further protection unnecessary.

The most noted of the later day Hudson's Bay men is Donald Smith, who for long, long years traded in the frozen, wind swept and otherwise desolate wastes of the Labrador, suffering all the discomforts and dangers of the long trails and cold, cheerless winter encampments, without a murmur and with but one object in view, and that to please his superiors. This patience, loyalty, devotion and suffering was rewarded at last when he was made governor of the company with the title of Lord Strathcona.

Chapter XX

Jedediah Smith's California Expeditions

Jedediah Smith's California Expeditions

The first man to cross the North American continent was the trader Alexander Mackenzie, late in the eighteenth century. Lewis and Clark, in 1804-1805, repeated the exploit farther to the southward, but the great central regions lying between Oregon and Mexico remained for many years unpenetrated and unexplored. It remained for another fur-trader to break through the intervening barriers of mountain and desert and open up a central route to the Pacific.

Many expeditions had surged up to the eastern slopes of the Rockies, but, as waves break upon their impact with the ocean beach, so these expeditions halted at the mountain wall and ebbed back again.

A few isolated cases of mountain trappers penetrating beyond the first rocky ridges were recorded at a very early date, but until the arrival of the Henry-Ashley party very little was known concerning the region. Ashley did quite a bit of exploring in the eastern portions of the great interior basin but beyond the Great Salt lake stretched deserts, unknown and unvisited by white man, and beyond these arose the high Sierras of California, forming another formidable barrier to be crossed should one wish to reach the Pacific by this untried route.

Spaniards from Mexico and California had been

halted on their eastern journeyings by the deserts. The task of exploring this region of mystery and opening up a central route to the Pacific was performed by Jedediah Smith, who had already done quite a bit of exploring work in the Oregon regions. Just why Smith's exploits and even his very name have been allowed to sink almost into oblivion is hard to understand, while lesser men such as Bonneville and Fremont have become famous by merely following in his footsteps. Perhaps had Smith been less modest and had he possessed the ready pen of a Fremont, or had a writer of international fame, such as Bonneville found in Washington Irving, written his biography, he might have fared better and today might be accorded his rightful place in history as a pathfinder, instead of being largely unknown and unhonored by his countrymen. Smith, although a far better man than either, might well be placed alongside of Radisson and Groseilliers in the list of unremembered heroes.

Jedediah Smith was born at Bainbridge, New York, June 24, 1798. He came of good pioneer stock, the family being continually on the move to new territory; always with faces turned toward the setting sun, a characteristic that father imparted to son.

Jedediah had thirteen brothers and sisters and, as his parents were poor, they were unable to give their children any considerable education, yet our young man succeeded in obtaining a smattering of knowledge, and what was of more value, he was deeply imbued with the tenets of the Christian faith, which he maintained unwaveringly throughout his life, although his companionship and environment in later years were of the wildest and roughest character.

Leaving home to seek his fortune, he was first employed on one of the freight boats of the Great Lakes, where he met with trappers and traders passing between Montreal and the western posts. Fascinated by the life of a fur-trader, he resolved to enter the profession himself, and we soon find him at Saint Louis, headquarters of the American traders, looking for a job. It was here Ashley found him and engaged him in the Henry-Ashley expedition of 1823.

Smith served these gentlemen faithfully until their retirement from the business. He took over Ashley's interests in 1826, and from thence on the firm consisted of Smith, David Jackson and William Sublette. The partners divided their labors. Smith was the explorer. It was his duty to seek new trapping grounds, and learn the general character of the new territories and of the indian tribes that inhabited them; Jackson was to remain constantly in the mountains attending to the trading and trapping; Sublette was to see to the transporting of the furs to Saint Louis and attend to their disposal.

It seems that Ashley had entertained the idea of carrying out Mr. Astor's plans for the establishment of a post on the Pacific, from which the furs of the far west might be shipped by sea to the fur markets, and probably that is why Smith, while in his employ, had spent so much time among the British traders in Oregon. We know that Alexander Ross had looked upon him as a sort of spy, rather than as a trapper, and if he got any information from those sources it must have been of a most discouraging nature, but nothing prevented him from making a try at reaching California.

Beginning in the Salt lake country where the Ashley

explorations left off, Smith, in August, 1826, started out with a party of fifteen men and traveled in a southwesterly direction, passing Utah lake and spending some time in studying and observing the indian tribes of the region.

Traveling on to the southwest they came to the Virgin river and followed it to its junction with the Colorado, which the indians informed him fell into the Gulf of California. The Mohave desert barred his way to the Spanish settlements like an evil spectre, but he struggled through it and on to San Diego, there to arouse the suspicions of the Spanish officials. Through the intercession of an American sea captain, however, he was permitted to purchase what provisions he needed, provided he returned by way he had come.

Smith seems to have possessed the usual Anglo-american contempt for Spanish authority, for instead of complying with orders he marched northward some three hundred miles instead and wintered on the San Joaquin and Merced rivers, finding the region a profitable trapping ground.

The party made an attempt to cross the Sierra Nevada but were turned back by the deep snows. May 20, 1827, Smith renewed the attempt, taking but two men and seven horses and two mules. After an eight day struggle, in which two horses and one mule were lost in the passage over snow barrages from four to eight feet deep, they reached the eastern side of the mountains.

Now came a twenty days' march over a barren, sun-scorched region to the Great Salt lake, in which they suffered all the horrors of heat, thirst and hunger. They ate their horses one after another as they gave out under the strain, and when they were at the end of their jour-

ney they had only one horse and one mule remaining. Smith uses just one hundred and thirty words to record this terrible journey in his journal. He was a man of action, not of words. In fact, his whole journal is so brief that one cannot follow his trail with certainty, but it is presumed that he crossed the Sierra at, or near, Sonora pass.

In July, 1827, Smith set out to return to California at the head of nineteen men and two indian women. The Spaniards seem to have expected his return, for they sent a band of indians to head him off. These indians attacked the party on the Colorado river, killed ten of the men and carried off the two indian women as prisoners. This unfortunate affair occurred in August, and the survivors were obliged to hurry on to the Spanish settlements for relief, although they could scarcely count on a very hearty greeting.

Smith was allowed to proceed northward to join his companions on the San Joaquin and Merced. Finding them in a very needy condition he resolved to trust once more to Spanish generosity, but this time they clapped him into jail at San José, later transferring him to Monterey. He was soon released through the persistent intercession of certain Americans of the place, but was obliged to sign an agreement to leave the country. This he did, though not in the way or by the trail that the Spaniards expected him to take.

Having blazed a trail from the Great Salt lake to southwestern California, and then eastward over the Sierras from central California back to his starting point, he now proposed to link up these southern and central routes with the work already done by the British and American traders in Oregon.

Leading his party northward some three hundred

miles he wintered on a stream, which from the circumstance, is now known as the American Fork. Beaver were plentiful, and the trappers collected a small fortune as they moved along. They continued to trap and explore the country in a northwesterly direction until they had almost reached the Pacific, when they altered their course and headed due north for Oregon.

July 24, 1828, while encamped near the Umpqua river, the party was attacked by indians, and fifteen or eighteen men of the company were slain, two only escaping into the woods. Smith was absent from camp at the time of the massacre and was horrified upon his return to find his comrades cold in death, scalped and mutilated in the usual manner. Horses, furs and supplies were likewise gone. One of the men joined Smith, and the two shouldered their rifles and made for the British posts on the Columbia.

Living on the game that they killed, and calling into play all the skill, perseverance and woodcraft which they had acquired during their experiences in wilderness life, the two men finally won through and reached Fort Vancouver in safety. The other survivor lived on roots and berries for a while, and finally fell in with a party of friendly indians who conducted him to Oregon.

Doctor McLoughlin received Smith and his companions with open arms, sent out a party to recover their furs from the indians, and when this was accomplished paid the American \$20,000 for the lot. This transaction offers a pleasing contrast to some of the previous affairs between British and American traders, but was quite in accord with the gentlemanly character of the great McLoughlin.

One of Smith's men took service with the English traders and returned to the very country where he had

had such a narrow escape. Smith and the remaining man left Vancouver in March, 1829, and traveled up the Columbia to Fort Caldwell and Flathead House and on to the rendezvous of his partners, Jackson and Sublette, which he found without difficulty. Emerson Hough has well said: "Readers would not receive the plain story of Jedediah Smith as fit for fiction. It would be too impossible."

During Smith's absence Jackson and Sublette kept about one hundred men busy scouring the country for furs; they competed with Ogden's men for the fur of Oregon, they penetrated the dangerous country of the Blackfeet, they visited Yellowstone park, and added much to the general knowledge of the country. Hostile indians picked off a man from time to time, but they repaid the savages with interest when opportunity offered and kept on with their work.

In 1830, the three partners sold out the business to a new firm of which Milton Sublette, Jim Bridger and Thomas Fitzpatrick were leading members. The palmy days of the fur-trade were over, and a few years later it was no longer profitable to trap the beaver. Perhaps the three veterans hoped to pass their remaining days in the peace and quietude of a civilized community, but in Saint Louis Smith met several of his brothers who were in severe financial straits, and with characteristic generosity he offered to fit them out for the Santa Fé trade, which was then a splendidly paying proposition. Once more the old traders heard the call of the wild, and in the spring of 1831, we find the three friends, Smith, Jackson and Sublette on their way to Santa Fé at the head of a wagon train, eager to try their hand at the Mexican trade.

In the desert country near the head of the Cimarron

they ran out of water and Smith pushed on ahead to seek for the precious fluid. Finding it at last he refreshed himself and started to carry the welcome news back to his comrades, when he was fired upon by ambushed Comanches and seriously wounded. If the savages were looking for an easy scalp they chose the wrong man, for desperately wounded as he was he was still full of fight, and three of the Comanches bit the dust before they succeeded in despatching him with their spears.

Thus perished one of the greatest, although the least known, of all the great characters of the American west. A tireless explorer, a skillful trader and a fearless adventurer, Smith was also in addition to all this, a polished gentleman and an humble and devout Christian.

Chapter XXI
Travels of Bonneville and Walker

Travels of Bonneville and Walker

In 1832, Captain Benjamin Bonneville, an officer of the regular army, obtained leave of absence to conduct a trading and trapping expedition into the mountains of the west. Bonneville has found an able chronicler in Washington Irving, and because of this book the captain obtained a fame all out of proportion to the actual value of his achievements. In fact, Bonneville discovered nothing that the fur-traders had not already been perfectly familiar with for a decade or more, but his able lieutenant, Mr. Walker, made a remarkable trip overland to California by the central route, being second only to Jedediah Smith in accomplishing this feat.

Bonneville is wrongfully credited with taking the first wheeled vehicle across the plains and into the mountains. We have seen how the birch-bark canoe and the dug out of the first fur-traders of Canada were succeeded largely by the keel-boat on the larger streams, and that after the first excursions up river the Americans largely abandoned water travel and substituted the pack-horse for the boat, and still later the pack-horse gave way to the covered wagon. The overland route, too, was changed from the valley of the Missouri to that of the Platte. Bonneville's party transported their goods by wagon and he was the first to take wagons through the South pass, this being about all the

credit that the captain is rightfully entitled to. Wagons had been used on the Santa Fé trail as early as 1822, and Smith, Jackson and Sublette had used wagons in the Wind river country two years before Bonneville started west, while Ashley had taken a wheeled cannon through South pass in 1826. Marcus Whitman, the missionary, has the honor of being the first man to take a wagon clear through to the Pacific, but we should not be surprised to learn at any time that some trader or trapper should turn up and claim even this distinction.

Bonneville's force consisted of one hundred and ten men, chief among whom was I. R. Walker and M. S. Cerre, both veterans of the Santa Fé trade and both well fitted to cope with the dangers and difficulties of such an expedition. The party moved up the valley of the Platte early in the spring, when the grass was fresh and green and flowers were blooming everywhere. Their desire was to get across the broad reaches of the plains before the scorching heats of summer set in. At one stream where quicksand prevented the crossing of the wagons they took off the bodies, caulked them with a mixture of tallow and ashes, and in these improvised boats floated their goods across in safety.

Bonneville was much impressed with the wild scenery of the Black Hills, and still more when he sighted the Rockies. Crossing through South pass they reached Green river, scene of so many of Smith's, Jackson's, Sublette's and Ashley's adventures. Here they came in contact with a party of American Fur Company men under a Mr. Fontenelle. Here Bonneville was to get a taste of rivalry as it existed between the traders, for in spite of the hearty reception extended him by Fontenelle, the latter tampered with his men and succeeded

in enticing some of them to come over to his outfit. Later on the captain evened up matters by coaxing some of Fontenelle's men to take service with him.

From Green river, Bonneville proceeded to the Salmon branch of the Columbia, where he had heard beaver were plentiful. He got along splendidly with the Crows and Nez Percés with whom he met, and he was overjoyed with the wild, free life he was experiencing, after the dull routine of post duty, inseparable from army life in time of peace. Christmas, 1832, was celebrated with much feasting and hilarity. After the celebration he started out to find a band of his trappers for whose safety he had begun to grow anxious. The searchers suffered much from cold and hunger, as the weather was bad and the game scarce, but at last the missing men were found.

Bonneville marched and countermarched through the trapping grounds, seeking the best sections for fur, and all the while having great sport with the game. Falling in with a party of trappers under Milton Sublette, there ensued considerable rivalry between the two parties as to which would secure the most fur, but friendly relations were maintained. He also came in contact with a Hudson's Bay trader on Snake river. This trader was out of goods but daily expecting supplies from his post on the Columbia. Quite a number of indians were there awaiting the arrival of these goods and Bonneville, thinking to anticipate the Englishman's trade, attempted to open negotiations with them, but the Englishman was too sharp for him, and not only succeeded in inducing the indians to wait for his goods, but even shook the fidelity of some of Bonneville's men by offers of free liquor.

Seeing himself outwitted and beaten by the English trader and fearing the loss of some of his own men, the captain beat a retreat and went to Green river and went into camp in close proximity to a similar rendezvous of the Rocky mountain men and still another band of trappers in the employ of the American Fur Company.

In these trapping operations the men were keen competitors, and rivalries often ensued which at times approached open hostility, but in their summer camp all rivalry was forgotten and a carnival of feasting, drinking and gaming was indulged in. Friendly Shoshone indians also resorted to these gatherings to share in the revelry, especially the young squaws who were on the lookout for white husbands. Many of these wild mountain trappers had their hearts pierced with cupid's sharp darts at these meetings, took squaws to wife and brought up a progeny of half-breed children. Kit Carson, the Bent brothers, and the mulatto, Jim Beckwourth, were among those who married indian women. The dusky damsel stalked about camp, arrayed in all the savage finery of paint, beads and gaudy dress and moccasins, winning admiring stares from the bearded, bronzed faced, buckskin-clad borderer, who, well supplied with money after the annual settlement, was quite willing to lavish it liberally on some favorite beauty could he but win her smiles. The trapper indulged in his little fling after the trapping season was over just as the sailor celebrates his arrival at the home port after a long cruise.

Hearing much concerning the Great Salt lake, Bonnevile resolved that after he had broken camp at Green river, he would send an expedition under Walker to explore the lake and trap for beaver along its shores

and tributary streams. This expedition set out the 24th of July, 1833, and was soon struggling through the parched and sandy wastes surrounding the great lake. It was quite in contrast with the land of plenty they had just left. Game was scarce, water more so, and as they struggled on they suffered the horrors of heat and thirst, until from sheer necessity they were compelled to turn northward to more promising regions where water could be obtained.

On the shore of Ogden river they found beaver and at once set out traps. One after another of these traps were stolen by prowling indians in a most exasperating manner. Perhaps this may account for, though it does not excuse, the cruel treatment inflicted upon the natives on every occasion. It seems this band of trappers were either of a rather bloodthirsty disposition, or else their leader was of a different character than was Bonneville, for while the captain got along amazingly well with the indians, Walker and his men had scarcely gotten free from their commander when they began to shoot down the indians like dogs, twenty or more being massacred at one time on the Ogden river for no apparent reason whatever.

Pushing farther into the deserts, Walker crossed the Humboldt, to which he gave the appropriate name of Barren river. In October he crossed the Sierra Nevadas and emerged upon the western slope, where pure water and forests of gigantic trees were a most welcome sight after the hideous deserts they had just crossed. It is thought that Walker discovered the Yosemite valley during this journey, but the facts are not clear. He did not encounter hostile indians as Smith did on his last trip, nor was the crossing of the mountains made under

the same trying conditions as that memorable crossing of Smith's had been attended with.

At Monterey they were hospitably received by the Spanish and here they held high carnival, selling their furs and spending the proceeds with a liberality characteristic of trappers. Perhaps their liberality had something to do with the hospitality they enjoyed, for we know that Smith was thrust in jail and even threatened with being sent to Mexico for trial when he visited the region a few years before.

Recrossing the Sierras, Walker headed northward along the eastern edge of the range for some distance, and then turned eastward across the deserts toward the Humboldt, then turning northward again to the Snake and from there to Bear river, where he rejoined Bonneville.

The return journey had been marked by the same barbarous treatment of the indians that had signalized their western march. A couple of Mexicans had joined Walker in California and they, no less bloodthirsty than their American companions, varied the sport of shooting down indians by chasing them on horseback over the deserts, lassoing them and dragging them to death. Bonneville was much grieved when he learned of these excesses, but he could do nothing about it.

While Walker was absent on the Salt lake and California expedition, Bonneville had moved about from place to place, sometimes in company with men of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, and sometimes with his own party alone. He had wished to continue his journey along the Columbia as far as the Willamette in Oregon, but as the Hudson's Bay Company controlled all the posts in that region he knew all those

store houses would be closed to him and that his expedition might end in starvation, so he gave up the project.

After three years of absence Bonneville returned to civilization only to find that the government, by failing to hear from him had given him up as lost and had caused his name to be removed from the army rolls. The publication of Irving's book on the adventures of Bonneville turned so much attention toward the gay captain that it led to his reinstatement in the army and gained for him a reputation as an explorer far exceeding that justified by the facts.

Chapter XXII

Wyeth's Enterprise - a Fur-trade Rendezvous

Wyeth's Enterprise - a Fur-trade Rendezvous

Another interesting personage made his appearance in the Rocky mountain region about the time Bonneville was making his debut as a traveler and trader. It was none other than Nathaniel J. Wyeth, a New England yankee, in whose fertile brain was conceived a magnificent plan for the capture of the fur-trade, and the establishment of a factory on the Columbia for the canning of salmon. Although, like Bonneville, Wyeth was a "tenderfoot" in the western life, he proved to be made of the same sterling stuff that is supposed to be characteristic of the people of the rugged region from which he came, and although he failed in realizing the objects of his journey, he played no inconsiderable part in the history of the region for several years.

In 1832, Wyeth, at the head of a party of New Englanders, each as ignorant and inexperienced in prairie or mountain life as their leader, left Saint Louis and started on their long journey toward the Columbia. At Independence, Missouri, they fell in with a brigade of Rocky mountain traders under William Sublette and Robert Campbell on their way with supplies to the annual rendezvous at Pierre's Hole on Green river. Wyeth was glad to join this party of experienced men and traveled with them by way of the Sweetwater and

South pass, a route that a few years later was to become the famous Oregon trail, the highway over which the missionaries, Whitman and Spalding, with their wives, the first white women to cross the continent, traveled, taking with them also the first wagon to be carried from the Mississippi to the Columbia – an event that was to have much political weight later on.

At Pierre's Hole, Wyeth met with many mountain men, and here he had his first real taste of indian fighting in the celebrated battle with the Blackfeet, of which we will have more to say presently. From this place he proceeded to the British post at Fort Vancouver, where he was well received, but learned to his chagrin that most of his goods were worthless for the indian trade. To complete his misfortunes, his tender-foot comrades here deserted him, having had quite enough already of the wild life of the plains and mountains. In short, Wyeth lost everything except his grit and perseverance, but armed with these he started for far away Boston to make a fresh start.

Wyeth went with Milton Sublette to the Big Horn river, and there the two men constructed a bull-boat and with four indians for companions started down the river on their long voyage to the eastern settlements, going in advance of the main party who were to transport the cargo of furs down to market. It required all the skill the crew possessed to steer the crazy craft clear of mud-bars, rocks and submerged snags, as well as to keep an eye always alert for hostile indians. All went well until they fell in with a party of friendly Crows, who, in spite of their friendliness stole, or begged for, everything in sight.

Reaching Fort Cass, on the Yellowstone, one of the

posts of the American Fur Company, they sold a portion of their beaver skins and buffalo robes and then pushed on down the river, dodging war parties of Blackfeet who were alert and anxious to annex the scalp of any unlucky trapper or trader who might be caught off guard or overpowered by numbers. In spite of their dangerous surroundings and enforced vigilance the voyageurs enjoyed the trip. The swift current carried them rapidly along, and they further increased their speed by hoisting an improvised sail on an equally improvised mast.

Buffalo, deer, and other game thronged the banks and furnished an abundance of fresh meat. The weather was delightful and all things, except the Blackfeet, seemed to conspire in making their trip an easy and pleasant one, but the men never relaxed their vigilance. They camped on islands in midstream, when there were any; they landed early and cooked their meals, then leaving their fire burning would re-embark and drop down the river for miles and encamp without a fire at some sheltered place.

Reaching Fort Union, at the mouth of the Yellowstone, they landed and partook of generous hospitality, which the commandant, McKenzie, the famous "King of the Missouri," was wont to extend to travelers. At Fort Union they met the upbound keel-boat of William Sublette bringing supplies for the Rocky mountain men who were in competition with the American Fur Company. Here Milton Sublette joined his brother and Wyeth went on down the Missouri in a wooden canoe which he had substituted for the bull-boat.

Wyeth had several indian scares and several close shaves from shipwreck on the treacherous river, but he

at length reached the settlements in safety. This voyage, along with the voyage down the Arkansas of Ezekial Williams years before, show what risks these early fur-traders were obliged to take in traveling through the untamed, indian infested wilderness in those early days.

Wyeth was soon back in the Rockies again at the head of a new organization. He brought with him the naturalist Nuttall and he also brought a store of whisky for the indian trade, but upon his arrival on the Columbia he found that Doctor McLoughlin had forbade the sale of liquor to the indians at the posts under his jurisdiction and Wyeth, to his credit be it said, readily agreed to discontinue the sale also.

Wyeth built Fort Hall in 1834, one of the first American forts west of the Rockies, and a noted place in later days of travel along the Oregon trail. Wyeth, with all his pluck and yankee ingenuity, found it impossible to compete with the wealth and power of the British traders, and all his enterprises ended in failure.

We have already mentioned the famous trapper's rendezvous at Pierre's Hole, where an annual gathering of traders, trappers and indians was held. Perhaps a few words regarding this famous rendezvous will not be out of place here.

The free-traders did not depend upon established posts at commercial strategic points at which to do their trading, as was the custom of the larger and older organizations; also, they depended far less upon the indian to supply the fur than did the Canadian traders. Anything the indian had to sell they, of course, took, but they did not want to be dependent upon the fickle and unreliable savages any more than necessary.

An annual gathering place was appointed, and here the scattered bands of trappers assembled at the appointed time to receive pay for the season's work and purchase supplies for the ensuing year. Here plans for the coming year were studied out, and arrangements for any contemplated enterprise were completed. These annual meetings were held at various places, but Pierre's Hole has become the best known of them all.

At these wild gatherings the men who were the real explorers of the interior of the continent met and laid plans for expeditions into the most remote places, known to be swarming with hostile indians both ready and anxious to raise their scalps. We doubt if many of these trapper-explorers realized that they were doing anything out of the ordinary in thus opening up new regions and new routes of travel for their race — routes over which the later settlers flocked into the country, giving but little or no thought to the grizzled men who had blazed the way. The objects of the travels of these trapper-explorers was not discovery for the mere sake of discovery, but beaver was primarily the object of their quest. The average trapper was just as loathe to see the country settled by home-makers of his race as was the indian himself, and so we cannot attach any philanthropic motives to his explorations in these unknown wastes.

It was at Pierre's Hole that the famous battle between the trappers and Blackfeet occurred in 1832. Captain Sublette was in charge of the rendezvous at this time, and Nathaniel J. Wyeth's party of New England tender-feet were also encamped there at the time. In addition there was an independent party of trappers under command of a man named Sinclair.

On July 17, Milton Sublette, brother of the captain, set out from the rendezvous with a party of fourteen men and went into camp farther on down the valley. Sinclair's party of fifteen men and Wyeth's eleven New Englanders accompanied Sublette and went into camp with him. On the following morning a crowd of people were observed approaching camp. At first they took them to be a band of American Fur Company men who, under the leadership of Fontenelle, were operating in the country, but Wyeth's spyglass soon showed that the approaching party were Blackfeet.

Just what the intentions of these indians were will never be known for a certainty, but they halted and one of their chiefs approached, holding up a peace pipe. A halfbreed trapper and a Flathead indian who were with Sublette's party rode out to meet the chief. Both of these men had scores to settle with the Blackfeet, and here was an opportunity for revenge. Watching their chance they shot down the chief, snatched off his scarlet robe and galloped back to their friends amid a shower of balls from the Blackfeet. This act of treachery precipitated the battle.

Hastily taking possession of a swamp the indians began to throw up breastworks. Word was carried back to William Sublette's camp, and in a short time the valley was full of men galloping to the scene of the disturbance. Large parties of Nez Percés and Flatheads were encamped at Pierre's Hole at this time, and they eagerly joined the white men in their quarrel with the common enemy. William Sublette ordered an immediate charge upon the Blackfoot fort, but no one seemed to be eager to enter the swamp until Sublette, Campbell and Sinclair set the example, after which, of course, the men

fell in line. A hot battle followed. Sinclair was killed and Sublette badly wounded, but the trappers and their indian allies pressed on forward.

At this juncture it was rumored that another band of Blackfeet were attacking the rendezvous. This brought things to a halt. The attacking party was divided, one party remaining to watch the Blackfoot fort and the other hurrying back to defend their own camp. Their fears proved groundless, and night coming on it was decided to attack the fort again next morning with the full force, but the Blackfeet had had enough fighting for the time and stole away in the darkness.

Another tragedy had its beginning at Pierre's Hole. The American Fur Company, wishing to find the rich trapping grounds of the Rockies from which their free-trade rivals drew their bountiful supply of pelts, sent two veteran traders to dog the footsteps of the free-trappers and spy out the country. Fitzpatrick and Bridger were at the head of the band whose footsteps Vanderburgh and Drips, the American Fur Company men, were sent to follow. In the splendid beaver country between the Big Horn mountains and the Black Hills the free-trappers discovered that they were being followed and spied upon. Not wishing to share their trapping grounds with rivals, Bridger and Fitzpatrick silently packed up, and crossing over the difficult, snowy passes of the Wind river mountains to the Snake river valley, some three hundred miles to the westward, where they fancied themselves free from their rivals, but whichever way they went Vanderburgh and Drips were sure to find them out sooner or later. Tiring at last of this game of hide and seek the Rocky mountain men deliberately led their rivals into the

dangerous country of the Blackfeet, and here the pursuers fell into an ambush and Vanderburgh was killed.

Such were the desperate means by which traders sometimes ridded themselves of rivals.

Chapter XXIII
Free Traders and Trappers

Free Traders and Trappers

Canada was the home of organized trade. In America the free-trader flourished. In the days of French rule monopolies were granted to a few favored individuals, but all others were prohibited from entering into the trade. We have seen how Radisson and Groseilliers fared by violating this prohibition. Others were equally as unfortunate unless they condescended to pay bribes to the officials. The Hudson's Bay Company, backed when necessary by British bayonets, crushed rivals with a ruthless hand. South of the Canadian boundary John Jacob Astor succeeded in monopolizing much of the trade, but always the free-trader and the free-trapper flourished and would not be downed.

There is something distinctively American in the free-traders' direct methods of dealing, this cutting loose from organizations and going it on one's own initiative. The idea of a few favored folks profiting at the expense of the many was repellant to early Americans, and much of our wonderful success as a people and as a nation can be traced to individual initiative, rather than to organized or governmental action.

We have seen how free-traders and free-trappers became the real discoverers and trail-blazers of the interior of the continent south of the international boundary, although most of our historians give all the credit

to Fremont and other so-called pathfinders of later days.

In some ways, however, the organized methods of the Canadian traders had an advantage over the free system. The organized trader had a greater opportunity to be beneficial to those who traded with him than did the free-trader; likewise he was able to protect the fur-bearers to a considerable extent, something which the free-trader, of course, could not do. The liquor traffic which worked such fearful havoc among both indians and whites along the border, was discouraged and disapproved of by the Hudson's Bay Company when its evil effects were noted, but whisky became a chief article of barter with the free-trader who, while himself depreciating its evil effects, was compelled by the ruthless methods of rivals to enter into the whisky business also. Of course he charged scandalous prices for the stuff and watered it copiously, but in spite of all this the indian craved it and would have it at any sacrifice.

The frontier trading posts became the centers of the wildest of orgies. How many murders and wars, how much degradation and sickness and misery can be charged to the free-trader and his vile whisky Heaven alone knows. The government in later years made many efforts to stop the traffic, but while some of the offenders were caught and punished, others took their places and the evil work went on unabated.

Some of the first trans-Allegheny pioneers were free-traders. Moving from place to place and from tribe to tribe, with their small stock of goods tied to the backs of a few pack-horses or stowed snugly away in a big canoe, these fearless men plied that hazardous trade quite unnoticed by the world at large. It is possible that some of the English or colonial traders may have

been on the Ohio or its upper tributaries even in advance of LaSalle. As long hidden journals and manuscripts are continually coming to light, perhaps new and valuable information may finally turn up on this subject. English traders were keen competitors with the French on the Ohio and streams farther south before the French and Indian war, and little independent trading posts were scattered all along the Mississippi and its tributaries. Saint Louis became the center of American trade, and early in the last century Andrew Henry built a trading post beyond the first barriers of the Rockies. Later General Ashley and his associates abandoned the idea of fixed trading posts and substituted the rendezvous plan instead.

The men who were known as free-traders or free-trappers, to designate them from the paid employees of the great organized companies, were generally of pure American stock, there being a predominance of Kentucky and Virginia blood in their veins. Also there were men of Spanish or French descent, especially of the latter. One of the most noted of all, old Jim Beckwourth, [or Beckwith as it is sometimes spelled] was a mulatto.

The free-trappers constituted a class to themselves; they recognized no law or authority except those that they voluntarily subscribed to, but each man depended upon his skill in the chase, his dexterity in the use of firearms, his knowledge of woodcraft, and, above all, in his own reckless bravery to pull him through. They banded together at times for mutual protection and chose leaders, but they did not obey those leaders with the servile docility of the Canadian trapper but considered him merely as an equal with themselves, temporarily vested with authority.

With some tribes of indians the trapper waged per-

petual war, with others he lived in peace, adopted their manners and even married their women. Many of their half-breed descendants still linger in the west.

Some of these free-trappers, notably Rose and Beckwourth, arose to the position of chief of their adopted tribes. A few of these men were educated and refined but the majority were un-lettered, scorning the refinements and learning of well-ordered civilization. Their dress was typical of their trade, a fur cap, fringed deer-skin hunting shirt and leggins, with moccasins of the same material completed their costume. The unerring rifle and keen, long-bladed hunting knife were inseparable, indispensable companions, and of his prowess with these weapons the most miraculous tales are told. When the weather permitted the trapper's roof was the starry heavens; a skin tepee or a rude log hut answered his purposes at other times.

Many of these men, like the savages among whom they lived, were unspeakably filthy in dress and habits; others, like the dandies of the indian villages, delighted in fringed and beaded hunting shirts and mocassins, and if he chanced to be a "squaw man" he delighted to see his better half decked out in all the paint, beads and other savage finery so dear to the heart of the indian. Like the indian also, the trapper valued a good horse above all other possessions, for his very life often depended upon the speed and endurance of his mount.

With the end of the fur-trade most of these wild blades entered the service of the government as guides, scouts and packers, while a few settled down to try their hand at farming or stock raising – in which tame occupation, most of them cut sorry figures. Many amassed fortunes in the fur-trade, but because of their wild

habits and free and easy manners most of their wealth got away from them once they reached the nearest trading post or settlement. Very few retired wealthy and fewer still even retired at all, but ended their days, as they had lived their youth, in some secluded valley, far from the comforts of civilization, dreaming, always dreaming of the eventful past.

Among the earliest free-traders was a member of the Irish nobility, John Johnson, whom the love of adventure had lured away from his Irish estates to enter the life of an indian trader at the Soo. Johnson soon became a famous personage in the Great Lakes region, and was extremely popular with the indians. A chief by the name of Wabogish had a beautiful daughter who was the center of attraction of all aspiring wooers of the tribe. Johnson's heart was won also by this dusky beauty, and forgetting his honorable connections in Europe, as so many wilderness wanderers before and since have done, he asked the chief for the girl's hand. The shrewd old red-skin bade him prove his devotion as well as the honesty of his purpose by returning to Ireland and disposing of his estates. Johnson hastened to comply with the requirements of the chief and thus won the indian beauty and, we presume, he lived happily with her ever after. During the war with England in 1812, Johnson's establishment was burned, and he and his wife had experiences which neither of them would soon forget.

The fearlessness and heroism of these men are almost beyond comprehension. We have seen how Ezekial Williams, when all his men had been massacred and he alone left to carry the news of his disasters to the settlements, tarried along the upper Arkansas to trap the

beaver which he found plentiful. John Colter, with a single companion, Potts, had gone on a trapping expedition into the Blackfoot country, although he knew these indians were among the most cruel and blood-thirsty in the west and that their hostility had been recently increased by the killing of one of their number by Captain Lewis during his memorable expedition in company with Captain Clark.

Dearly did Colter and Potts pay for their recklessness. After dodging the Blackfeet for some time they were finally surprised by these human wolves and Potts, who offered resistance, was killed while Colter, seeing his helplessness, quietly surrendered. The Blackfeet turned all the vials of their pent up wrath upon the helpless Colter. Stripping him naked they bade him run for his life, little doubting that their fleet braves would have no trouble in overtaking the white man. It was to be a race for the swift, and the prize was to be Colter's life. Spurred on by the hope of escape Colter did his best and gradually drew ahead of his pursuers, save for one fleet fellow who seemed to be gaining somewhat, and who held a spear ready to transfix the white man the moment he succeeded in getting close enough to hurl the weapon. Seeing the hopelessness of outdistancing his savage pursuer Colter suddenly turned and faced the indian, the blood streaming from his nose and mouth as a result of his exertions. This so startled and confused the Blackfoot that he tripped and fell, breaking his spear as he did so. Like a flash Colter sprang forward, seized the broken spear and pinned his enemy to the earth, then, turning, he sped on with increased hope and finally eluded his fierce pursuers.

Naked and unarmed, his feet and body torn and

bleeding from contact with thorns, briars and cactus, with no food except the roots he could find and dig up with his hands, Colter kept on and finally reached a trading-post on the Missouri.

One would think such an experience would have cured Colter of all desire for the wilderness, yet we find him going again and again into the indian country, lured on by the quest of beaver and the love of adventure, but, finally, some one came along who was able to do what the Blackfeet could not. This someone had enticing eyes, wore skirts, and wielded such an influence over our adventurer that he quit the wilderness and its terrors and settled down to live with his fair seducer amid the peace and quietude of the settlements. Colter had fallen in love.

There were acts of cowardice also as well as those of heroism. A party of trappers coming down the Platte in canoes were unfortunate in having their boats upset and supplies and powder lost. In terror the party hurried to the settlements, abandoning a man named Scott who was sick and could not keep pace with his terrified companions. Meeting with another party the trappers had their wants relieved, but thinking that their deserted comrade was perhaps dead by this time they said nothing about their leaving him to his fate. A year later Scott's body was found near some high bluffs, many miles from the place where he had been deserted. Because of this incident the place became known as Scott's bluffs, and is further commemorated today in the name of a nearby city.

Another conspicuous case of cowardice on the part of one party and heroism on the part of another was the desertion of Hugh Glass, one of Andrew Henry's men,

while in the perilous Blackfeet country. Glass had been terribly injured in a scrimmage with a grizzly bear, and his life was despaired of. Henry left Glass in the charge of two men, one a mere boy, which some aver was none other than the later famous Jim Bridger. Frightened at being left alone, with an almost helpless man, in the midst of bloodthirsty and cruel savages and believing that Glass could only live a few days more at best, they deserted him, taking along his rifle and reporting that he had died. Glass, contrary to expectations, did not die, but succeeded in dragging his weary, lacerated body a full hundred miles to Fort Kiowa on the Missouri, living enroute upon berries and the flesh of a buffalo calf, from whose carcass he had chased away a pack of wolves.

Chapter XXIV
Some Famous Free Trappers

Some Famous Free Trappers

To give an adequate history of the American free-trappers would require volumes rather than a few brief pages, but we cannot turn from them without a fleeting glance at a few of the most outstanding figures. We have noticed some of the adventures of Colter, one of the first of the free-trappers in the Rocky mountain region, and have mentioned such others as Reznier, Hoback and Robinson who were with Andrew Henry during the first efforts to establish trade beyond the western mountains. Were we to select any one man, however, as typical of the class, we would choose old Jim Bridger as a fair representative of all.

James Bridger, or "Old Jim Bridger" as he is best known, first saw the light of day in the district of Columbia in 1807, a year of important happenings in the early fur-trade of the far west, and while still a young lad he drifted westward, following that magnetic impulse which has ever drawn youth toward the setting sun. At Saint Louis he enrolled himself in the company being raised by General Ashley, and thus made his debut into the fur-trade of the Rockies.

Bridger is described as being brave, kind and generous to a fault. Ignorant alike of book learning and the conventionalities of polite society, he fitted nicely into the rude surroundings in which he found himself, and

he was far more at ease in the skin tepees of his indian associates than he would have been in the civilized surroundings of a settler's cabin. Like all of his kind he was superstitious, rough in his speech and somewhat unscrupulous in his treatment of rivals. It goes without saying that he was fond of whiskey. We would not have chosen him as typical of his class if he had not.

Bridger married a squaw and by her had half-breed descendants. After the days of the fur-trade he served as scout and guide to various government expeditions and as guide for several expeditions, notably one headed by Sir George Gore, which spent two years in the western wilds.

An amusing anecdote is related of Bridger when listening to Sir George read of some of the adventures of Baron Munchausen and, of course, not being acquainted with literary characters he knew nothing of the Baron's reputation for veracity, and when Sir George had finished reading the trapper remarked that he "be doggoned if he swallowed everything" that Munchausen said, and expressed his belief that the Baron was a "darned liar," but, he added that perhaps some of his own exploits would sound just as unreasonable. Bridger in fact had a reputation for his disregard for the truth but little behind that of the Baron himself, but most of his lies were so utterly unreasonable that we suspect the old fellow did not expect to be believed.

Bridger's travels took him into many new regions, and he was the first to find his way over the pass now named for him. Another of his exploits was his descent of Bear river to Great Salt lake in a canoe during the summer of 1824, thus being the first white man perhaps

to look upon the waters of that great salten sea, although this claim is questioned by some authorities.

Bridger saw and described the wonders of the Yellowstone park region, but his story was only set down as "another of Bridger's lies," and so as little attention was paid to him as had been paid to Colter, who had seen and likewise described the same region years before. Bridger finally settled down on a farm near Westport and lived to a ripe old age, his last years being embittered by approaching blindness. Only recently has Bridger's grave been rescued from oblivion and a suitable marker erected over the last resting place of the man who made more real discoveries than all the so-called pathfinders of the later days put together.

Jim Baker was another noted character of the old west, being one of the few mountain men of those days who was not a southerner. He was an able scout, trapper, and guide, and possessed all the rude characteristics of the rough men of those days.

Uncle John Smith was another youth to whom the call of the "wild and woolly west" was so strong that in 1826, while yet a lad, he ran away from home and went to live with the Blackfeet. Transferring his allegiance to the Sioux he lived with that tribe until his heart, being won by a dark beauty of the Cheyenne maidens, he went over to the Cheyennes and married the girl. Smith early entered the fur-trade, and soon won the respect of the savages by his just and honorable dealings. He became a powerful personage among the Cheyennes, and compelled all Mexican traders to pay tribute to him. One party who refused were stripped of all their goods and sent back to the settlements. For these high-handed proceedings the governor of New Mexico of-

ferred a reward for Smith, dead or alive, but no one could be found who wished to take the chances to be incurred in enforcing the order.

Another famous trapper was Bill Williams, whose name is perpetuated in the chain of mountains said to have been discovered by him. He had been a Methodist minister in early life, but had drifted into the fur-trade, moving from tribe to tribe and thoroughly affiliating himself with the savages and their mode of life. He had a faculty for acquiring languages, and proved of much benefit to the early missionaries in helping them to translate the Bible into the indian tongue. In spite of his early training and sacred calling, however, Williams's conduct was in strange contrast to his professions, for he gloried in the wild orgies that so often marked the gatherings of trappers and borderers. He was finally killed by the indians, a fate all too common in those days.

Kit Carson was by far the greatest of all the Rocky mountain men. Not only did he possess all the bravery, skill and daring of Jim Bridger, but he was far more cultured, intelligent and humane than any of his contemporaries – excepting perhaps the veteran explorer, Jedediah S. Smith, of whose career we are already familiar.

Carson was born in Kentucky, December 24, 1809. His parents sought to start him in the saddler's trade at the age of fifteen, but so irksome was the task that after two years he deserted the saddler's bench and joined a party of traders bound for far away Santa Fé. The truthfulness, sobriety and pure moral character of the boy was soon noted, and although his entire subsequent life was spent among the rough characters and wild

scenes of the savage west, he ever maintained his incomparable reputation.

Carson's grit was soon to be subjected to the test. One of the traders had his arm accidentally shattered by a rifle ball and, gangrene setting in, it was soon plain that the man's life could only be saved by amputation of the injured member. No one else volunteering to attempt the surgical job, young Kit stepped forward, and with butcher knife and saw promptly cut off the arm and seared over the severed end with a king bolt which he took from one of the wagons and heated in the camp-fire for the purpose. The man recovered and Kit Carson was a hero.

Kit found New Mexico very much to his liking and several times, when he had actually started back to his people, he faced about and returned to that alluring country. For some years he was employed as a teamster and traveled over much of the southwest and even down into old Mexico for long distances. In 1829, he joined a party of mountain trappers and made his first venture into the fur-trade. To follow him in all of his wanderings would be to visit every portion of the west. Perhaps no trapper has covered so much territory as he. With eighteen other trappers he crossed over the deserts of the great basin to California and thence northward for some distance, after which they returned to Santa Fé, selling the furs that they had collected for \$24,000, not a small sum for so small a party to earn in one season's work.

Carson kept continually on the move. We hear of him on Green river, the Platte, the Salmon, the Arkansas, the Yellowstone and the Missouri. He was equally at home on the great plains, the Arizona and Califor-

nia deserts, and amid the wild fastnesses of the Rockies, the Big Horns, the Black Hills and the Sierra Nevadas. Many were the close shaves and hair breadth escapes he experienced with grizzly bears and wounded buffalo, with indians and Mexicans, and with such small things as thirst, starvation, heat, cold and fatigue thrown in for good measure.

Although in nearly every expedition Carson held some subordinate position, he nearly always distinguished himself in some way and came back with a greater reputation than the leader. He understood indian warfare as well as did the savages themselves, and the punitive expeditions he led against them were always successful.

When the trapping of the beaver was no longer a paying occupation, Carson took service with the Bent brothers at their fort on the Arkansas, as a hunter for the establishment. In 1842, he entered the service of Fremont in the same capacity. This was the famous South pass expedition which brought Fremont into prominence, and led to his being further entrusted with the business of "exploring" the west. Carson accompanied Fremont in all of his long journeys, traveling over ground already familiar to him through his many trapping excursions, and proving himself an invaluable aid to the officers in many ways.

Fremont has come down to us as the great "pathfinder" and Rocky mountain explorer, but he followed the guidance of Carson, and Carson was but following in the footsteps of Ashley and Smith and Bridger and Walker and Ogden, and a host of other trapper-explorers to whom the west had long been an open book.

Fremont and Carson played a conspicuous part in

the winning of California for Uncle Sam during the war with Mexico, and at the close of that conflict Carson was employed by the government to pacify the indians of the southwest. Whenever he could deal with the savages peacefully he did, but when compelled to fight he struck swiftly and terribly.

During the Civil war he joined the federal forces and was brevetted brigadier-general.

Carson was twice married, first to an indian woman and lastly to a Mexican. He was ever a loving husband and a kind father. His death occurred at Fort Lyon in 1869.

Jim Beckwourth was of mixed French and negro blood. He came west with Ashley in 1825, and soon rose to prominence as a hunter, trapper, trader, scout and indian fighter. Like many others of his class he married a squaw and eventually arose to the position of chief of the tribe. His daring and bravery are proverbial. Like Bridger he seems to have had scant regard for the truth, and his published biography is a mass of fiction. The historian, Parkman, brands Beckwourth as "a ruffian of the worst class; bloody and treacherous, without honor or honesty." Carson, Lucian Maxwell, the Bent brothers and others who were his companions and associates do not agree with Parkman's harsh assertions, and testify to the honesty of the man.

In 1842, Beckwourth erected a trading post on the upper Arkansas, where the city of Pueblo now stands, and there did a thriving business, being a good mixer and a natural born trader.

Chapter XXV

French Voyageurs or Coureurs de bois

French Voyageurs or Coureurs de bois

As the free-trader and free-trapper were peculiar to the fur-trade within the limits of the United States, so also another distinct class originated in Canada and conducted operations throughout all the vast forests and along the network of rivers and lakes which characterizes that north country. This class of men were known as voyageurs or coureurs de bois – hardy wood rangers, skilled in the arts of hunting, trapping and wilderness life, being on a par with the red indian himself in woodcraft and wilderness lore. These men were mostly of mixed French and indian blood, and in them the best, as well as the worst, traits of both races found expression – their boisterous gaiety, love of song and of fine apparel gave evidence of their Gallic ancestry, while their indian blood was responsible for their fondness for the chase, the war path and the lonely forests and prairies.

With a canoe load of goods one of these men would push out into the current of the great river at Montreal and disappear amid the maze of forests and waters to the westward, to spy out the best fur country and make friends with the indian tribes enroute, perchance to marry one of their women and settle down for life among the savages, whose customs and manner of life he was most adept in adopting as his own.

For months, perhaps years, these wood rangers would be absent from civilization – even the rude civilization of the fur posts – but finally his feather-like canoe would be observed drifting down the river to Montreal, or some other headquarters of the fur-trade, piled high with valuable pelts, the proceeds of which would be spent in a brief season of wild revelry. On these rare occasions there would be feasting, drinking, singing, dancing, gambling, and the wildest excesses. A writer of the times thus describes these revelries:

“You would be amazed if you saw how lewd these peddlars are when they return; how they feast and game, and how prodigal they are, not only in their clothes, but upon their sweethearts. Such of them as are married have the wisdom to retire to their own houses, but the bachelors act just as an east indiaman and pirates are wont to do; for they lavish, eat, drink and play away as long as the goods hold out; and when these are gone, they even sell their embroidery, their lace, and their clothes. This done they are forced upon a new voyage for subsistence.”

The wild excesses and slight regard for law and authority entertained by the voyageurs alarmed and disgusted the French king and the authorities of Canada to such an extent that stringent laws were enacted for their restriction. Death was made the penalty for trading in the interior without a license, but they might just as well have tried to stop the waters from flowing over the rapids at Lachine as to pass laws prohibiting these wild fellows from taking to the woods. Life in the Canadian colony offered so little in the way of inducement to the husbandman, the pay for all work was so meager and one was subjected to all the rigors of the

rule of tyrannical civil officers, as well as of the grasping, jealous minions of the church. With nothing to lose and everything to gain the energetic and ambitious took to the woods and making friends of the savages married their women and settled down in the wilds, laughing at all the mandates of church and state. Allegiance to both king and pope sat very lightly with them, indeed. Occasionally one of them would seek out a priest, obtain absolution for the past and then go back to his forest wigwam, his squaw and his half-breed children and begin the wild life all over again, but many of them dispensed with the services of the priests altogether.

The missionaries detested the voyageurs because they introduced so much of the evils of civilization among the indians and so little of its benefits.

Especially did the fathers deplore the trade in brandy which so demoralized the natives and undid so much of the work of the church. One of the priests writes: "Our missions are reduced to such extremity that we can no longer maintain them against the infinity of disorder, brutality, violence, injustice, impiety, impurity, insolence, scorn and insult which the deplorable and infamous traffic in brandy has spread universally among the indians of these parts." Yet the Jesuits never entirely withheld their services from the offending voyageurs, for fear that they would break all connection with the church and prevent the indians from being christianized.

French officialdom, too, always with an eye open for bribes or tribute money, were never over-anxious to put the king's decrees into effect, and many of them are supposed to have been financially interested in the operations of the voyageurs. Certain it is that they were

never repressed and never interfered with to a great extent.

Every class of men is sure to produce leaders, and the voyageurs were no exception to the rule. Among these self-made men none were braver, more enterprising or more successful than Daniel Greysolon DuLuth. This daring leader is claimed, on pretty good authority, to have been in league with Frontenac, the governor at Quebec, to defraud the crown in illicit trade with the indians. However unlawful DuLuth's business transactions may have been, he certainly did New France great service in exploring the regions about Lake Superior and the upper Mississippi, and in establishing posts at various points of vantage – notably one at the point where Fort William was later built and another on the Detroit river in 1686.

In 1687, DuLuth, with Tonti and Durantaye, both skilled leaders of the wild banditry of the forests, led a party of indians from the upper lakes to aid Denonville in his campaign against the Iroquois. Later on he was in command at Fort Frontenac and performed excellent services in the troubles with the hostile savages.

Tonti, the able lieutenant of LaSalle in later years, began life in the wilderness as a voyageur, and Nicolas Perrot also varied his services to king and colony with bits of bush ranging and voyaging on his own account.

The intermarrying of the voyageurs with the indians brought forth a crop of half-breed children, who in later years became the paid employees of the Hudson's Bay and Northwest Fur companies; they also formed no inconsiderable part of the armies with which the French faced the English in the last years of French rule in Canada.

Many of them crossed over into American territory and became free-traders and trappers, French names became common in the west, and everywhere on the map one comes across rivers, lakes and mountains which were either named by or for these wandering free lances. Many of their little trading posts were the genesis of a thrifty settlement, and some of our cities have sprung up upon the sites of their rude stockades.

In later years in the valleys of the Saskatchewan and the Red river of the north, the French half-breeds formed large settlements, and became so powerful that they set the laws of Canada at defiance, and British troops had to be sent against them. A writer who has traveled much in the northwest and has written much concerning its history, describes the Red river half-breeds as being "friendly and kindly in their nature, usually on good terms with white travelers and indians alike, though to be sure occasional attempts at horse stealing by the indians resulted in a collision with those people, but this was unusual."

True to their breeding these people were unsettled in habit, impetuous in act and quick to resent interference by the government. They depended largely upon the buffalo for food and clothing, and followed in the wake of the great herds much as their indian predecessors had done in the years gone by. When buffalo were plentiful they feasted royally and the camp was gay with song and dance and revelry. When the buffalo failed them, they starved.

The few luxuries and necessities their simple natures craved were obtained from the Hudson's Bay Company's posts in exchange for dried buffalo meat and robes. Their mode of travel while on the hunting trail

was the same as had been followed by the indians before them, save for the large two-wheeled carts, known as "Red river carts," made entirely of wood and rawhide and with no iron or other metal in their construction. The wheels, which were sawed from the ends of logs, turned upon an ungreased wooden axle with a complaining screech which could be heard for miles.

While the bulk of these people were of French and indian descent, there was a sprinkling of English and Scotch blood among them, and later on American trappers were captivated by the dark-eyed daughters of this nomadic people, married them and settled down to become useful citizens.

The last stand made by these peculiar people against the encroachments of civilization was in 1879, when the Hudson's Bay Company ceded its exclusive territorial rights over to the Canadian government. The country was thrown open to white settlers, and seeing that they were sure to be overwhelmed by the inrush of English settlers the Gallic-indian blood of the Red river people flamed up in revolt. Louis Riel headed this hopeless revolt, and when it collapsed he fled over the border into Montana.

Encouraged by the clemency shown the insurgents and knowing he had the sympathy of the French population in general, Riel returned in 1885, and with the aid of a half-breed trader named Dumont, raised a band of rebels and succeeded in beating a Canadian force at Duck lake. A rebellion of the Cree indians followed, and the authorities at Ottawa realized the necessity of promptly quelling the insurrection at all hazards. An army of four thousand volunteers under Major-general Middleton marched to the scene of re-

bellion and soon restored order. Riel and several of his accomplices were hanged, and his forces were scattered never to unite again.

The extermination of the buffalo soon after, further tended to break up the half-breed settlements.

The Canadian voyageur or coureur de bois as they were called in the days of the old French régime, no longer form a distinct class in Canada. Like the American free-trapper, they have played their little part in the drama of the conquest of the American wilderness and have stepped off the stage forever. Whatever may have been their faults and however great their follies, they had a peculiar niche to fill in the great drama of history, and they played that part well.

Chapter XXVI
Forts of the Fur-trade

Forts of the Fur-trade

Look at any map of Canada or of the early American west and you will notice it dotted with the forts and trading posts of the fur-traders. The trader and trapper was the pioneer of settlement as well as of discovery. Even today in the far north the only sign of the white man or of British authority is a small circle and the magical letters H. B. C., indicating one of the posts of that fur-trade empire which still reigns well nigh supreme over those desolate Arctic wastes.

Everywhere in our own land, especially the far west, the advance of settlement followed in the wake of the fur-trader, and the first rude cabins of the settlers were invariably clustered about the walls of some fur-trade post. Many of our great cities have begun their existence as trading posts. A history of these early trading establishments would comprise the greater portion of our pioneer annals.

The first fort builders in Canada were French and English fur-traders. One of the most famous of these early establishments was Fort Prince of Wales. It was situated on a sand point which extended out into the bay at the mouth of Churchill river. It was square in shape, each of the four walls being three hundred yards long. In three of the four bastions supplies were stored and wells of water for convenience in case of a close

siege, while in the fourth was a powder magazine. The walls were of stone and were massive, being thirty feet wide at the bottom and twenty feet at the top, and were mounted with forty large cannon. In the center of the court stood the strong stone house of the governor. The warehouses and barracks for the men were ranked along the inner walls. The garrison consisted of thirty-nine men, and in addition were the officers and the clerk, which made a total of over forty men in all. The place was taken and destroyed by the French in 1782, but was reoccupied and rebuilt soon after.

Within the walls of Fort Prince of Wales was enacted the cruel and tyrannical acts of old Governor Norton. Outside its walls the old monster's gentle and beautiful daughter perished from starvation and hardships when she fled from the French conquerors, her fear of the foreign soldiery being such that she chose death rather than the possibility of dishonor at their hands.

This fort was also the starting point for Hearne's exploring expeditions, and it was one of the ironies of fate that it was this good man, rather than the villian Norton, who was compelled to lower his flag to the French conquerors.

The first white visitors to the upper waters of the Mississippi and its tributaries were French trappers and traders, and their posts were the first sign of white occupancy in that land. The rude stockades of LaSalle and Tonti in Illinois and of Radisson at the farthermost end of Lake Superior were followed by others of like character. In 1772, Fort Orleans was built by the French on the Missouri, on an island five miles below the mouth of Grand river. There is a vague story of a

desperate battle with savages and of the massacre of the garrison, but nothing positive is known.

Three French forts were at one time established on the Osage but little is known of their history. Fort Osage, or Fort Clark, was built near the mouth of the Kansas, and was in use for trading or garrison purposes until 1827.

The Chouteaus had forts at several places in the Missouri valley, and Joseph Robidoux had an establishment at what is now Saint Joseph. Council Bluffs and vicinity was a favorite site for trading posts, no less than twenty being located here in the fifty years following Lewis and Clark's great council with the indians, which had given the place its name. The first of these was called Bellevue and was built in 1805; the most important was Fort Lisa, built in 1812. Trudeau had a trading post on the Missouri as early as 1796, and on up the winding, muddy course of the great river post after post sprang up and flourished, as did Fort Pierre in Dakota, or else vanished after a brief and unprofitable occupancy, leaving nothing but crumbling ruins to mark their passing.

Lewis and Clark built the first American fort on the Missouri, at the Mandan towns in 1804. Manuel Lisa and his associate traders had a post in the Rockies early in the last century. In later years Fort Benton was a noted post on the upper waters of the Missouri but the most famous of all was Fort Union, built by the American Fur Company in 1829.

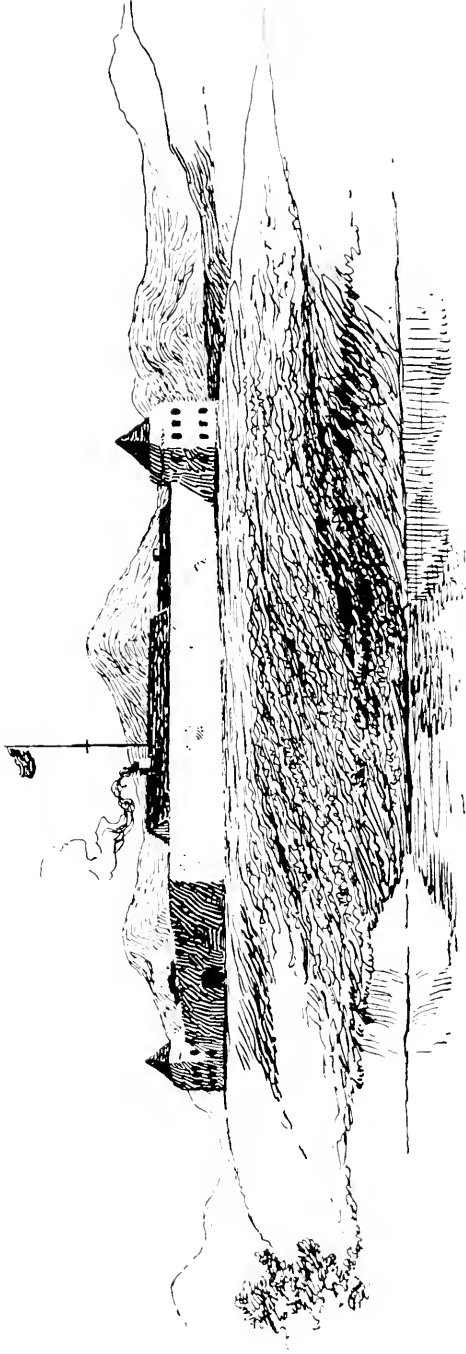
All through the Oregon country the British traders scattered their forts and trading posts after ousting the Americans from Astoria. The most important of the British posts was Fort Vancouver.

In the valley of the Arkansas were many fur-trading posts and forts. Portuguese House, Fort William, or Laramie, Fort Platte, Fort Lupton, Fort Saint Vrain and others had a more or less prosperous existence during the period beginning as far back as 1763 and extending on down to the Mexican war, and later. In 1821, an attempt was made to establish a post at what is now the city of Pueblo, but this was not successfully accomplished until Beckwourth built his fort there in 1842. French and Mexican traders had forts within a few miles of where later, in 1829, the Bent brothers erected their famous fort, but, like many of these outposts of trade and of civilization, their history has been forgotten.

Volumes might be written concerning the Bent brothers – Charles, William, George, and Robert – of their fort and its half-civilized, half-savage retinue, of the many interesting events that occurred inside its walls and in the region surrounding it. The Bents were the first permanent white settlers in what is now Colorado, coming into the country in the early '20's. All the brothers married Indian or Mexican women, and until their deaths were respected as the most influential and respectable citizens of the territory.

William Bent was the leading spirit in this family of traders, and his name is associated with the affairs of the fort to a much greater extent than was any of the others. Charles Bent was appointed governor of New Mexico by General Kearny after the latter's conquest of the country. He governed wisely and well, but fell a victim of assassination during the Indian and Mexican revolt which followed the army's departure for California. All the Bents were noted for their upright char-

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FORT UNION

From an original drawing made by Alexander H. Murray in 1845

acters and their scrupulous honesty in dealing with indians.

Bent's fort was long the most important American post in the southwest. The author of "Doniphan's Expedition," printed in 1848, describes it as follows:

"Fort Bent is situated on the north bank of the Arkansas, six hundred and fifty miles west of Fort Leavenworth, in latitude $38^{\circ} 2'$ north, and longitude $103^{\circ} 3'$ west from Greenwich. The exterior walls of this fort, whose figure is that of an oblong square, are fifteen feet high and four feet thick. It is one hundred and eighty feet long and one hundred and thirty-five feet wide, and is divided into various compartments, the whole built of adobes or sun dried bricks." On the top of this wall cactus were thickly planted, and this effectually precluded the possibility of any one scaling the walls.

In addition to Bent's fort, the brothers and their partner, Saint Vrain, built a fort, which they named Saint Vrain, on the South Platte for the trade with the Sioux and Northern Cheyennes, and Fort Adobe, on the Canadian, to cater to the wants of the Kiowa, Comanches and Apaches. The more southern tribes did their trading at Fort Bent.

Next to Fort Bent on the Arkansas, perhaps most has been written concerning Fort Union on the upper Missouri. Fort Union is said to have been the best built fort in the entire west, being two hundred and forty by two hundred and twenty feet in dimension, and surrounded by a palisade or square of hewed timber about a foot thick and twenty feet high. There were bastions on the southwest and northeast corners well provided with cannon. There was a double gate to insure safety in case of any sudden surprise on the part of the savages

and inside the enclosure were the barracks, magazines, warehouses, workshops, etc.

It is said that a distillery was also in operation within the walls of the fort. Work on the fort was begun by Kenneth McKenzie in 1829 but not finally completed until 1833. Supplies were brought up the Missouri from Saint Louis, first in Mackinaw boats, fifty feet long, ten feet wide on the bottom, and holding about fourteen tons of merchandise, being towed the whole weary way by a crew of men walking along shore and pulling on ropes. In later years steamboats took the place of Mackinaw boats.

Tributary posts were scattered about at advantageous points, but Fort Union was always the great center station for the American Fur Company, and here McKenzie reigned like a feudal lord. He could almost say with truth :

I am monarch of all I survey,
My will there is none to dispute.

Many noted personages visited the fort in the days of McKenzie's glory. Pallisser the hunter, Catlin the artist, Audubon the naturalist, Bodmer the painter and Prince Maximilian of Weid, who has left a most valuable account of the place and what he saw there. To this fort and its tributary posts came Sioux, Blackfeet, Mandan and Gros Ventres, with their beaver, otter, fox, marten and other valuable furs, which they exchanged for tobacco, cloth, knives, blankets, axes, ornaments, and other articles dear to the savage heart, not forgetting alcoholic liquors which, until the government interfered in 1834, was the chief article of barter. The strictest guard was kept at all times against surprise while

dealing with tribes known to be hostile or untrustworthy.

Fort Laramie, another famous post, was first a log stockade and was built in 1833, by Robert Campbell, and first named Fort William in honor of William Sublette. Later on it was renamed Fort John and still later, being sold to the American Fur Company, it was rebuilt of adobe bricks and the name changed to Fort Laramie. It was a trading point for Sioux and Cheyennes, and the center of frequent hostilities. In 1849, the California argonauts made it one of their stopping places. The United States government stationed troops at the place after the fur-trade days were over. Parkman visited the fort in 1846, and has left us a very interesting account of his stay there.

Still another famous post of the early fur-trade days was Fort Garry, around which has grown the great city of Winnipeg. How many of the thriving city's population know the history of Fort Garry? Like the present inhabitants of New York, Albany and Montreal, whose inception was the fur-trade and whose founders were bronzed, bearded, voyageurs, traders and trappers. Fort Garry was two hundred and eighty by two hundred and forty feet in dimension, built of stone and well equipped for defense. Several other forts were built near Winnipeg, and there was some fighting in this region between the Hudson's Bay men and their rivals of the Northwest Company.

We might go on indefinitely to tell of these early posts and forts and their trader occupants, but a halt must be called somewhere. Before taking a final farewell to these outposts of empire, we will glance briefly at some of the aspects of life as experienced by those who made their homes within their sheltering walls.

Chapter XXVII
Life at the Fur Posts

Life at the Fur Posts

Life at the fur-posts was at times almost unbearably lonesome and monotonous. For months no new faces were to be seen, the same scenes, the same ceaseless, changeless round of duty stared one in the face day after day without variation or change. No wonder the arrival of a stranger was hailed with so much pleasure; no wonder the men indulged in such wild excesses at times. At such times the neighborhood of the forts would be lively enough – sometimes uncomfortably so.

As most of the trappers and wilderness wanderers were rude and unlettered they were denied the pleasure of reading, the solitary man's consolation, even if reading matter were to be had, but, here and there, were to be found men of culture and refinement who were acquainted with the best of literature, and some even had accumulated a library. Some were interested in natural history, ornithology, geology, ethnology and kindred subjects, and for them the forests, plains and mountains, the wild animals, the birds and the native indian tribes offered never ending subjects of interest and study.

Amusements were few, dancing and card playing being the principal pastimes indulged in. There was a billiard table at Bent's fort which had been brought all the long way from Saint Louis. When "flush," the trapper was an inveterate gambler, and frequently spent the proceeds of a whole year's work in one night's

revelry. The indian, too, was addicted to the baleful influence of games of chance, and it was not uncommon for them to lose all their possessions, including their favorite horses, and even their wives.

Few white women found their way into the remote regions, and in consequence English, Scotch and American traders followed the example of their French predecessors and sought wives and sweethearts in the indian villages where they traded. In the far southwest they succumbed to the graces and wiles of the dark-eyed *senoritas* of the Mexican settlements and, in consequence of these promiscuous marriages, the early native born westerners were of very mixed blood.

The food served at the fur-posts consisted largely of flesh, buffalo meat and venison, and in the far north rabbit, beaver and sometimes musquash. Of course a large quantity of bacon and biscuits were consumed, while many of the forts had gardens where, in season, fresh vegetables were produced, but, meat was at all times the staple diet. A favorite article of food to be carried on long journeys was pemmican, the pounded marrow and flesh of the buffalo, mixed with wild berries and dried in skin bags weighing something like sixty pounds per bag. This pemmican was considered the most wholesome food obtainable, having the additional virtue of keeping well and taking up so little room in one's pack. On the Canadian frontier dried fish often took the place of dried buffalo meat.

As was the case with the indians, so also the trapper's fare was usually either a "feast or a famine;" in times of plenty he feasted royally, and no one was more hospitable or liberal than he; in the lean times he starved uncomplainingly.

Whisky was an ever desirable article of trade, being dearly loved by indian and trapper alike. Heavy drinking was the rule with most of the border men, and a "teetotaler" was the exception.

The wildest revelries attended the ingatherings of the trappers at the close of the season's work. Dancing, singing and gambling were the order of the day; lewd squaws reaped a golden harvest; quarrels were frequent, often ending fatally for one, perhaps both of the parties concerned. Outside the walls bloody duels were fought with rifle and bowie knife. Even the peace loving and quiet Carson was once obliged to fight a duel with a braggart Frenchman and we may be assured he acquitted himself well, so well, in fact, that the wounded braggart was humbled and acknowledged himself in the wrong.

The liquor traffic had caused much evil among the indians of the Saint Lawrence and the Great Lakes regions, and had given the Jesuits much concern. The Hudson's Bay Company had sought to curb its use, for the factors realized that a drunken indian was a poor hunter, but among the American free-traders it was ever the chief stock of trade, and while the American law of 1834, caused the American Fur Company to restrict its sale, the independent traders laughed at the law and continued the trade. The following description of one of the drunken orgies indulged in by the indians and trappers of those days is from an account of an eye witness to the scenes described:

"The night of our arrival at Fort Platte was the signal for a grand jollification by all hands, with two or three exceptions, who soon got most gloriously drunk, and such an illustration of the beauties of harmony as

was then presented would have rivalled Bedlam itself, or even the famous council chamber beyond the Styx.

"Yelling, screeching, firing, fighting, swearing, drinking, and such like interesting performances were kept up without intermission. . .

"The scene was prolonged 'till sundown the next day, and several made their egress from this beastly carousal minus shirts and coats, with swollen eyes, bloody noses, and empty pockets – the latter circumstances will be understood upon the mere mention of the fact that liquor was sold at four dollars a pint!"

A more interesting and a more satisfying account is given by Parkman of the domestic affairs at Fort Laramie, but even this milder portrayal would hardly tempt a woman of education and refinement to become a permanent inmate of a western fur-post. Parkman has left us a rather cheerless account of his visit to the Pueblo Fort in 1846:

"A few squaws and Spanish women, and a few Mexicans, as mean and miserable as the place itself, were lazily sauntering about. Richard conducted us to the state apartment of the Pueblo. A small mud room, very neatly furnished, considering the material, and garnished with a crucifix, a looking glass, a picture of the Virgin, and a rusty horse pistol. There were no chairs, but instead of them a number of chests and boxes ranged about the room. There was another room beyond, less sumptuously decorated, and here three or four Spanish girls, one of them very pretty, were baking cakes at a mud fireplace in the corner. They brought out a poncho, which they spread upon the floor by way of table cloth. A supper which seemed to us luxurious was soon laid out upon it, and folded buffalo robes were

placed around it to receive the guests. Two or three Americans besides ourselves were present.”

At Bent's fort liquor was sold at first, but was discontinued when its evil effects became apparent, and in consequence no such wild scenes were enacted as at some of the other posts. The Bents were gentlemen, and the place was conducted in a more systematic and orderly manner than was often the case elsewhere.

The commanders of some of the larger forts sometime lived in regal style. In Canada they often traveled in state with a retinue of gaily appareled servants. At Fort Prince of Wales Governor Moses Norton reigned like an Oriental despot. He was of indian blood, and his nine years' course of study in England had embodied in him all the vices, but few, if any of the virtues of either the red or the white races. He dressed like an indian but attempted to imitate the rule of an European prince. Frightful crimes are laid to his door. Poison was his chief method of ridding himself of indians who had incurred his displeasure, while he vented his spleen against his white subordinates with branding iron and whipping post. He maintained a large harem of beautiful indian girls, of whom he was insanely jealous. Attacked at last by a serious illness he had his wives assembled for a last farewell. One of the women began to sob bitterly and an officer present sought to comfort her in her grief. The dying tyrant was furious in an instant and threatened to burn the officer at the stake. He died a few moments later, cursing and fuming to the last.

Kenneth McKenzie also figures in a little affair of jealousy. A free-trapper had drifted into Fort Union with a canoe load of beaver pelts, which he sold and

at once proceeded to deck himself out in all the finery procurable at the post. No doubt he was a good looking fellow and as he swaggered about, spending money with lavish hand, he came under the observation of McKenzie's young indian wife. Both parties were very favorably impressed with each other and the affair seems to have gone beyond the stage of silent admiration, for the trapper was finally seen running toward the gate at full speed, with the irate commander at his heels flourishing a club. The trapper was not disposed to forgive the commander for his rude expulsion and he loitered about with his rifle, seeking an opportunity to shoot McKenzie, and the latter was obliged to have one of his men shoot the fellow in order to save his own life. The trapper was wounded, carried into the fort and treated kindly until his wound was healed, after which he was bundled out of the country.

Marriage ceremonies in those days were of the most simple nature. If the bride were an indian the trapper would present the bride's father with a few horses or other articles of value to the indian, and that was about all there was to the ceremony. In the southwest the Mexican girls were more particular and required the services of a catholic priest. Funeral services were of an equally simple nature.

As the country began to settle up most of the trappers and traders sought to do the right thing for their children and sent them away to school, but they themselves continued to retreat before the advancing civilization and ended their days in some remote mountain valley, unnoticed and unremembered.

The fur-posts were one by one abandoned and fell rapidly into decay. Many were taken over and garr-

soned by the United States army and thus took on a new lease of life. An effort should be made, before it is too late, to suitably mark the sites of those old landmarks – those early outposts of our civilization. The memory of these old posts and of the brave men who built and lived in them is just as worthy of remembrance as are our battlefields which we are so careful to mark and set aside as national parks. The tattered buckskin of those conquerors of the wilderness is every bit as honorable a uniform as is the gold braid, epaulets, and other trappings of our organized soldiers of later days.

Chapter XXVIII
Later Days

Later Days

The fur-trade saw its best days before the middle of the thirties. As one author says: "After 1834 it was no longer profitable to trap the beaver." From that date onward the fur-trade continued to decline in magnitude and importance. By the time of the war against Mexico, the west was also an explored country, and all that was required afterward was the working out of the details.

The fur-trade and the exploration of America went hand in hand; the trapper and the trader were the discoverers and explorers of all our vast country back from the narrow fringe of sea coast on both sides of the continent. A few seekers after golden cities or mines of precious stones, like Narvaez, DeVaca, Coronado and DeSoto, a few government equipped expeditions such as led by Lewis and Clark, and Pike, and Long, being the exception to the general rule.

Fremont, one of the best known of the later so-called pathfinders, traveled over country, every mile of which had already been traveled over by some wandering free lance of the fur-trade. It was Radisson, Groseilliers, Brûlé, DuLuth, and others of their stamp who made known the secrets of the Great Lakes, the upper Mississippi and the plains of the northwest; it was Vérendrye, the trader, whose eyes first beheld the Rockies;

it was Mackenzie, Fraser, Hearne, Henry, Ogden, Smith, Ashley, Bridger, Walker, Thompson and others like them that first traversed and made known the secrets of the interior regions of the vast continent. Even Lewis and Clark, those incomparable explorers, traveled in the wake of the fur hunter until beyond the rocky defiles of the "Shining Stonies." It was Samuel Hearne who first crossed overland to Arctic shores; it was Alexander Mackenzie who first pierced the mountain barriers which had turned Vérendrye back and passed on to the blue waters of the Pacific. It was the fur-trader, Jedediah S. Smith, who first crossed the central part of the continent and on to the western ocean by way of Great Salt lake, the Nevada deserts and the Sierra Nevadas. Fremont did much valuable work in making the public familiar with the great west, but it was his able and ready pen which accomplished this, his actual travels being all over known territory.

It was the fur-trade that established Montreal far up the Saint Lawrence, and our own great metropolis of Gotham was first a trading post, the site of which was purchased for a few strings of cheap beads. Albany, Detroit, Saint Louis all had their inception in the fur-trade, and the same may be said of many other cities of less importance. Radisson's post near the head of Lake Superior and Vérendrye's stations on the Saskatchewan and elsewhere were the first establishments of the white man in the far northwest. Andrew Henry's tragic experiences at fort building in the Rocky mountain region was the first American enterprise of that character in the far west. Bent's fort on the Arkansas was the first white settlement of what is now Colorado.

Garces and other Spaniards had explored the desert regions of the far southwest and Franciscan missionaries had been the first to settle California but the fur-trader Gray had first found the Columbia, while Astor's fur-traders had followed and flung the "Stars and Stripes" to the breeze in the land "where rolls the Oregon" before any rival had penetrated into that region. Farther northward, at Nootka, the Englishman, Meares, had raised the British flag over his rude trading post, and still farther northward Russian traders and sea otter hunters had won Alaska for the czar.

American historians have never seemed to fully realize the tremendous importance the fur-trade has had on the early history of the country, nor the debt America and Canada owes those bold, rugged adventurers who paved the way for the westward march of civilization.

To attempt to give in figures the extent and value of all this early trade would be impossible, as only a small part of the figures are obtainable, but the totals would be enormous.

After the beaver had been pretty well thinned out and it became no longer profitable to trap for them, the fur-trade began to languish in the American west, although it still continued in the frozen, snow bound forests of northern Canada. The old trappers turned to other occupations, such as guiding military forces and emigrant trains, hunting for army posts, etc. When the demand came for buffalo robes there was a fearful extermination of those animals, first for their hides and then for their bones. For unknown centuries the Indian had looked to the buffalo for all the necessities of life; their flesh was nourishing and there was a never failing supply of meat at all times; the rude weapons of the

plains indians, their bows, arrows and spears, enabled them to make great killings, and at times they adopted the expedient of driving the herds over precipices or into pounds and pitfalls where great numbers were slaughtered.

With the coming of the white man, with swift horses and accurate shooting firearms, the slaughter of the buffalo was greatly augmented, and when a goodly price was offered for the animals' hide and bones the grassy prairies became a shambles. The buffalo were killed in numbers which surpassed all records of slaughter. Colonel Inman and others who were in the west in the period preceding and following the great slaughter have collected data which staggers the imagination. The slaughter was greatest during the late seventies and by 1883 the buffalo were practically exterminated. Inman estimates that in Kansas alone 31,000,000 buffalo carcasses were purchased by various manufacturing concerns in Saint Louis and elsewhere, and that the price paid for same amounted to \$2,500,000. Estimates have placed the value of the beef and hides during the period of active slaughter at from \$15,000,000 to \$20,000,000.

The only consolation we can get out of the story of this ruthless destruction of the buffalo is in the fact that it was a death blow to the hard-riding, hard-fighting Sioux, Cheyennes and other buffalo eating tribes. Their meat supply, cut off, at one fell swoop as it were, they were forced to give up their roving habits and become reservation indians. There were yet to be occasional outbreaks and bloody fighting, but the long protracted indian wars were a thing of the past.

With the passing of the buffalo the wild indian went

also, and his place was taken by prosaic farmers and stock raisers of another race. Farms and ranches now flourish in the river valleys once dotted with the herd of game and the skin tepees of the savages; cities occupy the sites of the old trading posts; the trapper as a class has now disappeared and henceforth will be only a memory; "the wild and woolly west" is of the past tense.

Only in the cold forests and barren grounds of northern Canada does the fur-trade continue as an organized business. The Hudson's Bay Company still lingers in wild and isolated sections of the great empire over which it once ruled supreme, and life within the walls of its scattered stations is now prosaic enough. The glorious epic of the American fur-trade has passed into history, leaving a continent explored, settled and civilized in its wake.

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